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# THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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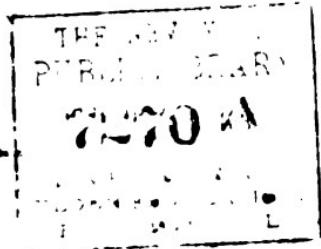
CAPTAIN HENRY CURTIES

Author of "A Bride on Trust," "The Idol of the King,"  
"Tears of Angels," "An Imperial Love," etc.



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# **THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY**



# THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

## CHAPTER I

### THE CRIME

THE chauffeur descended leisurely from his seat on the front of the motor-car; the day was hot and dusty; he was tired of sitting in the glare of the sun. Bending his body until his eyes came on a level with the wheels, he commenced one of those peering examinations of the interior economy of the motor so puzzling and uninteresting to the uninitiated.

“Fritz!”

The voice came from a pretty girl of about twenty standing at the open door of a house in Queen's Gate, within a stone's throw of Kensington Gardens.

“Fritz!”

The chauffeur stood up straight, a broad-shouldered dark young man of six or seven and twenty with close-cropped black hair and a clean-shaven, handsome face.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"What's the matter, Miss Ethel?" he asked anxiously. He spoke excellent English with the slightest German accent.

The girl's face bore evidences of great distress, and was very white.

"I wish you would go for Doctor Blake at once," she answered in an agitated voice. "Something has happened to father. He went to sleep as usual after lunch in the back drawing-room, and now we can't wake him."

The chauffeur was a man of action; he did not wait to hear more; passing round the front of the car, he gave the handle a twist to start the machinery, then mounted quickly into his place, and with a turn of the steering-wheel sent the motor round towards South Kensington.

Within ten minutes he was back again, bringing with him in the car a brisk-looking gentleman in a frock-coat and tall hat.

This was Doctor Blake, a practitioner from the Cromwell Road, who usually attended the family. With the quick business-like air of the doctor in good practice, he descended from the car and entered the house, the door of which opened for him immediately. He was met in the hall by the same young lady who had appeared on the steps and dispatched the chauffeur for him.

"Oh, Doctor Blake," she cried as soon as she saw him, her two hands clasped together, "thank God

## THE CRIME

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you have come! We are afraid father has had a seizure; he went to sleep as usual after lunch, and now we cannot wake him."

She led the way quickly up the stairs, the doctor following, to the back drawing-room, separated from the larger room by heavy velvet curtains.

Here was a prim-looking lady of about forty, and a younger one, who from the strong likeness between them was evidently the elder sister of that pretty young girl who accompanied the doctor.

The two ladies were most anxiously contemplating the figure of a gentleman of perhaps fifty-five lying back in a large easy-chair in the most shaded corner of the room. The younger of the two ladies was kneeling at his feet chafing his hands.

The doctor walked straight to the gentleman in the chair, took one of his hands in his own and felt the wrist; then replacing the hand he put his own over the heart, and finally pulled down one of the lower eyelids and looked at the eye.

All this being accomplished, he turned to the elder lady.

"Tell me, Lady Boulger," he asked, "exactly what occurred."

The lady addressed answered nervously and with great trepidation.

"Sir John was as well as possible," she said, "during lunch; he talked and laughed with the

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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girls, as he usually does, and ate a fair meal; not more than usual, but a moderate, good lunch."

"Did he take any wine?" asked the doctor.

"No; two-thirds of a glass of whisky in a tumbler of Apollinaris."

The doctor nodded.

"Then he came up here, as he usually does, not being a smoker, for an hour's nap. We always make a point that he shall not be disturbed during that time. If any visitors come, they are shown into the library. He has always had a fancy for this back drawing-room."

"And then?" suggested the doctor.

"I came up at a quarter to three, when the hour had elapsed, and found him, as I thought still asleep, with a handkerchief thrown over his head, according to his custom. When I saw he was asleep I went out and slammed the door to wake him, as I knew he had an appointment at a quarter past three. The motor-car was, in fact, waiting for him. The slamming of the door, however, had no effect upon him whatever. He made no movement."

"Then what did you do?" asked the doctor.

"I went to him and lifted the handkerchief. I was alarmed at the appearance of his face; it looked so blue. Then I called the girls, and we have been trying to revive him ever since; but he makes no movement at all."

## THE CRIME

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The poor lady buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

The doctor was a tactful man. "If you will go downstairs into the library with the young ladies, Lady Boulger, and will kindly send the butler to me, I will make a further examination of Sir John."

"Surely there is no danger—" began the younger of the two girls.

The doctor made no answer; he placed his arm gently round her, and led her after the two other ladies towards the door. In a few minutes the doctor re-entered the room, the middle-aged butler at his heels.

"Pull up the blinds, Simmonds," were the first words he said as he moved towards the recumbent figure.

Then, in the full glare of the sunlight, he took a long look at the livid face. This done, he turned to the butler.

"Simmonds," he said, regarding the man fixedly, "I am sorry to tell you that your master is dead!"

"Good Gawd, sir," cried the man in alarm, "you don't say so!"

The doctor pointed to the face of the figure in the chair; then, taking up a silk handkerchief which lay on the floor, threw it over it.

"The body must be removed at once," he continued, "to some spare room, where a further exam-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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ination can be made. You had better call the footman and get him to help you carry it. Stay!" he added, as Simmonds was leaving the room. "Not a word to the other servants that Sir John is dead. I must break the news myself to Lady Boulger and the young ladies."

In a few minutes the butler returned with the footman, and between them, with some help from the doctor, the body was carried upstairs and placed on a bed in a spare room. Then the doctor carefully locked the door, and descended to the library to break the bad news to the ladies.

In a few gentle sentences he conveyed to Lady Boulger the fact that in life and health she would look upon her husband no more. The two girls listened to him in a burst of grief, for to them it meant that they were now alone in the world. The present Lady Boulger was their stepmother, their own mother having died some seven years before.

The doctor departed in the motor-car, having left a message with the butler before starting.

"I shall be back within half an hour, Simmonds," he said. "Have a good supply of cold water and towels ready by the time I return, and two or three spare basins."

He was back well within the half hour, bringing with him another doctor and a young assistant; then the three entered the room in which the body of Sir John Boulger lay, and locked themselves in.

## THE CRIME

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The servants going to and fro past the door of the room heard the sound of voices, and, as one young housemaid asserted, cries of surprise. It was nearly two hours before Doctor Blake opened the door of the room, having rung the bell, and, emerging, inquired of Simmonds for the telephone.

Having rung up a number, he returned to his *confrères* in the room of death, and scarcely ten minutes elapsed before two men made their appearance at the front door, and were admitted by Simmonds. To his experienced eye the walk in life of these two visitors was unmistakable. They were plain-clothes police-officers.

Then the horrid truth came out — *Sir John Boulger had been murdered!*

Standing by the side of the corpse, Doctor Blake made his statement to the police. After briefly relating the circumstances of his being called to Sir John, he passed to the subject of the examination of the body by himself and the other doctor.

“After the body had been stripped by our assistant,” he continued, “Doctor Symes and I proceeded to make a careful examination of it. At first we found no cause for death; it was not until we turned the body over that the reason of it became apparent. We then discovered between the shoulder-blades, a little towards the left side, a triangular wound, in which, apparently, a piece of glass was firmly wedged, entirely preventing the escape of any blood.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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This piece of glass, upon further examination, proved to be the blade of what is called a Venetian dagger—that is to say, a dagger the blade of which is made of specially toughened glass of razor-like sharpness. When drawn from the wound with a pair of forceps, the blade measured about six inches. It had been driven in with great force, and had penetrated the heart, causing death in a few minutes. After the blow the blade had been snapped off short near the handle and left in the wound, thus preventing any external hemorrhage. This is the dagger-blade, Inspector Williams."

The doctor handed the detective a strip of glass fashioned in the manner of those triangular-bladed daggers used in the sixteenth century.

Inspector Williams made a careful note of the doctor's statement, then asked a question.

"Do you know, Doctor," he said, "who was the last person to see the deceased alive?"

"That I cannot tell you," he replied; "no doubt Lady Boulger will tell you."

"I think I will go down and question the servants first: perhaps her ladyship is too distressed. If you could see her, Doctor, and just reassure her a bit, I'll see her afterwards."

The doctor having expressed his willingness, the detectives descended to the back drawing-room in which the tragedy had been enacted, and rang the bell.

## THE CRIME

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"Now, look here, my man," began Inspector Williams, when the apprehensive Simmonds had made his appearance; "we are two police officers, and I want to ask you a few questions about this unfortunate affair. Now, can you tell me who was the last person to see Sir John alive?"

The man considered a few moments before he answered —

"Why, Fritz was the last person to see him," he exclaimed presently; "Fritz, the chauffeur, of course. Sir John told me to call him in, as he wanted to speak to him, and he went up into the back drawing-room just before Sir John went to sleep."

"Ah!" said the detective, with an air of interest. "What happened then! Did you see him come down again?"

"It was like this," continued the butler; "when Sir John told me he wanted to see Fritz, he was on his way up-stairs to have his usual nap. He called to me over the banisters, and I went and rung up Fritz at the garage, and told him he was wanted. It's only around the corner, and he came at once. I took him up-stairs, and knocked at the door before he went in."

"But did you see him come out?" asked the inspector.

"Yes. I happened to be coming up the stairs as

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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he came out of the back drawing-room, and I heard Sir John call to him as he came down."

" What did he say? "

" He said, ' Don't be late, Fritz, like you was this morning.' "

The detective laid down the fountain-pen he was writing with on the corner of the mantelpiece, with an air of disappointment. " Are you sure," he asked the butler, " that you heard your master say that? "

" As sure as I stand here. I heard his voice clear and strong, and I've been in the 'abit of hearing the same voice this ten year past."

" Well," resumed the inspector, taking up his pen again, " do you know if any one else saw him after? "

" I should think it was 'ighly unlikely," responded the butler. " Her ladyship and the young ladies was in the library. I went down to me dinner, and the footman sat talkin' and readin' the paper to me while I 'ad it. There was no callers."

The inspector, giving the butler up as hopeless, sent him for the footman, with a like result; not a ray of light came through the impenetrable gloom of mystery which surrounded the death of Sir John Boulger.

By the time the inspector had had all the servants up, one by one, and, later, made a few respectful inquiries of Lady Boulger and the two young ladies,

## THE CRIME

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the time of every person in the house had been accounted for during that eventful hour, when the master of it was supposed to be sleeping placidly in the back drawing-room.

Every outlet of the house was carefully examined by the detectives: there were not many.

There was the front door, the latch of which was down; the area steps, the drawing-room balcony, and a door across a paved yard in the rear leading out to some mews; but as the lock of this latter had not been opened for years, was rusted, and bore traces of undisturbed dust, the detectives soon turned their attention to something else.

They searched the house from bottom to top, even climbing out through a little trap-door on to the roof, but without elucidating one scrap of evidence.

It was evening before they finished their task, and then, as they descended the steps, the inspector's assistant, Sergeant Patrick, a clean-shaven, plain-clothes officer, made the following significant remark to his superior, who was twirling his moustache thoughtfully —

“ This'll be another job for Frisner, I expect, when he comes back from Paris.”

## CHAPTER II

### A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

FORTY years before, John Boulger, an intelligent-looking little boy from a village in Somersetshire, not many miles from Bath, made his appearance in the office of Messrs. Green and Owlett, wholesale drapers, of Watling Street, E.C., and modestly assumed to himself a stool in the darkest corner of their very dismal underground office.

The little boy was remarkable for a pair of very sharp eyes, which he used to such advantage that when he reached the age of twenty he had insinuated himself into the position of junior salesman for the firm, a situation he filled with a peculiar suavity and blandness of persuasion, found to be almost irresistible by the firm's customers.

When, in ten years more by stringent economy the young salesman had succeeded in laying by three hundred pounds, he announced, much to the firm's consternation and regret — for they looked upon him as a very useful and promising addition to their selling staff — that he intended, in the first place, to open a shop for himself, and in the second to take to

## A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

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wife a daughter of a customer of the firm who was possessed of a little capital similar to his own.

With this combination, John Boulger opened a small — very small — draper's shop in Oxford Street, a proceeding which was the cause of much head-shaking on the part of his older friends. This wagging of heads was, however, not justified, as at the conclusion of his first year's trading John enlarged both his family and his prospects by adding a baby to the former — Mrs. Boulger of course being credited with her full share of praise in this matter — and by increasing the scope of the latter by the addition to his business of the shop of his next-door neighbour, an unthrifty ironmonger who had gone broke, and fled from his irate creditors.

For three years this annual increase of the family and the business continued, side by side, then the business took the lead: the family remained stationary at three, a boy and two girls, while the number of shops incorporated into the great concern of Boulger and Co. went on increasing all down the street.

Boulger's were everything: butchers, bakers, candlestick makers, providers of all that man could need, and very nearly as much as woman could desire.

John Boulger's prosperity went on increasing with the girth of his waistcoat; as he himself was often heard to express it; he never once halted to

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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look back, but, on the contrary, kept straight on to fame and fortune up Oxford Street.

Twenty-five years after he had opened the unpretending little draper's shop, Boulger's was known far and wide as an Emporium for everything, from a stay-lace to a staircase, and was on every housewife's lips in England.

It was therefore all the more astounding that such a man as John Boulger, who had apparently passed through life without making any serious enemy — for he was an indulgent master, and of an easy-going, good-natured temperament — could have become the victim of a foul murder.

He had not long received the honour of knighthood, conferred upon him some five years previously on the occasion of the opening of a fine Grammar School, built at his own cost, in the nearest town to his native place; but it was little likely that such a distinction could have been sufficient provocation for such a crime.

No, the police were entirely at fault; one day succeeded another, and not the ghost of a clue was revealed.

The funeral had been one of the grandest ever seen in Queen's Gate, the number of splendid wreaths phenomenal; a summary of the deceased Knight's will had appeared in most of the papers, and recorded for the benefit of the public in general — and fortune-hunters in particular — the

## A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

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amount of the share of each of his children, and in each case the figure was a very handsome one, one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, for Sir John Boulger had been a very warm man indeed.

The inquest had been adjourned and adjourned, in the hope of some fresh evidence turning up which would strengthen the hands of the police, but none came. The jury struck at last, and insisted on returning a verdict that "Sir John Boulger was murdered by some person or persons unknown;" the which verdict, in the opinion of most people—including some of the police—consigned the mystery to the limbo of undetected crimes.

About three months after Sir John Boulger's funeral, his widow and his three children were sitting one sunny afternoon in the library of the house in Queen's Gate discussing the affairs of the late Knight; the family lawyer had just left them.

Ample as the provision for Lady Boulger—Sir John's second wife—had been, yet it was not sufficient to warrant her in keeping up the big establishment in Queen's Gate. That mansion, it had now been arranged, was to be taken over by the three children.

Sir John had been left a widower some seven years previous to his death, and had only married the present Lady Boulger about five years before. It had been considered a very good marriage for both parties; Lady Boulger was the niece of a some-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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what impoverished peer, the possessor of a very old title. What she did not bring to her husband, however, in worldly goods was certainly compensated for in family connections; those cousinships which came to the aid of Sir John's three children, and opened doors to them which under other circumstances the "sesame" of wealth would not have moved.

The four sat round a table in the library, a heap of papers before them just as the lawyer had left them, when he went through a summary of the late Sir John's affairs for their benefit.

The summary had been highly satisfactory to the three children, the residuary legatees. Horace Boulger, the son, sat at the head of the table in his black clothes, a pleased smile on his somewhat large features.

He was rather a finely built young man, with a clean-shaven white face, and shining black hair, very much brushed off his forehead. His cult was that of a man of letters, his aspiration, to be a Member of Parliament. In his heart he believed he had only to rise in the House to electrify it. Old Sir John had been very generous to him in the way of education; he had been to Harrow for a short period, and had then, at his earnest solicitation, been provided with a private tutor. After a careful preparation by this gentleman he had been sent to Cambridge, and at a second shot had secured a degree.

## A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

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Thus mentally equipped, Horace had faced the world with his intellectual knowledge capped by a barrister's white wig, as a member of the Inner Temple.

Sir John's plans had not included the introduction of his only son into his magnificent business in Oxford Street. Perhaps the keen acumen of the business man had early divined that his only son would be of no use there; but had he possessed the brains of a Rothschild, a business career would have been barred to him by reason of the rooted objection and stubborn resistance of his sisters to have anything to do with the Emporium which provided them with bread and butter of the very finest. They even made it a practice to pass the parental place of business with averted heads when Fate caused their motor to pass down Oxford Street, lest their eyes should rest upon some advertisement of "cheap lines at 5¾d." or some such enterprising invitation to commerce displayed in their father's window.

Horace laid aside the lawyer's statement of values with a sigh of satisfaction, and addressed a remark to his elder sister. "It seems," he said, "that our shares are likely to exceed the amount stated in the Probate; that will entail, of course, more legacy duty."

"I don't think we ought to grumble at that," replied Charlotte Boulger, "considering that we

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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shall still, as I understand, have five thousand pounds each more than we anticipated."

Miss Boulger, a young lady in her twenty-fifth year, had resented from the age of reason the fact of having been christened "Charlotte," and by many ingenious subterfuges had evaded its use. To call her by the name in full was to incur her severe and lasting displeasure; the use of the abbreviation "Lottie" galled her. "Lotta" she permitted under protest, but for some unexplained reason she preferred to be called by her intimates "Zara."

"I'm not going to grumble, for one," broke in Ethel, her younger sister. "As soon as our year of mourning is out, I'm going to enjoy myself."

"That reminds me," interposed Horace, "about the motor-car: what is to be done with that?"

Lady Boulger answered at once —

"As far as I am concerned, Horace," she said, "I renounce all claim to it, although your dear father was kind enough to leave it to me, with the carriages and horses; as you know, I can never travel in motors."

"Very well, then; that simplifies matters, though of course you must have the value of it. What do you say, girls, about the motor?"

The two girls looked at each other and exchanged a little smile.

"Oh, I suppose we had better keep it on here,"

## A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

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Miss Boulger answered casually, "hadn't we? It will be useful."

"Admitted," replied Horace judicially; "but there is one thing in connection with it that I should like to mention now; and that is, I object to employing the chauffeur."

"What, Fritz!" exclaimed both girls at once, their faces visibly lengthening. "Why do you object to Fritz?"

A frown settled on Horace's face.

"He was the last person to see poor father in this life," he answered solemnly, "and the police are by no means satisfied that he was not connected with his death. Remember that the one object of my life is to find father's murderer."

The faces of the two girls at once became very grave. Lady Boulger put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I will never believe," broke out Ethel, after a pause, turning rather red, "that Fritz had anything to do with it. Never!"

"Nor I, either," added Miss Boulger, emphatically.

Their barrister brother sat up in his chair and looked them straight in the face, in the manner of a counsel examining witnesses.

"You both seem highly interested in Fritz the chauffeur," he suggested. "I suppose that is because he is such a good-looking man."

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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The sisters answered simultaneously —

“ Not at all — not at all! We were thinking,” continued Zara, “ what a careful driver he is.”

“ I know dear father always put the *utmost* trust in him,” added Ethel.

“ That I am *sure* of, or he would never have let him drive him. However,” continued the younger sister, not liking, perhaps, the settled frown on her brother’s face. “ if you *insist* upon getting rid of him, I think I know some one who would be only *too glad* to engage him.”

“ And who may that be? ” asked her brother.

“ Hugh Featherstone.”

## CHAPTER III

### FRITZ

FRITZ HOFFMANN entered the Boulger *ménage* through the introduction of an eminent firm of automobile manufacturers who had a branch house in London. They spoke of him as a highly intelligent young man, who had passed the tests imposed upon chauffeurs with a degree of *éclat* not often reached by members of that useful class.

Being in appearance prepossessing and in manner pleasant, he soon ingratiated himself with the feminine portion of the family; while his careful driving and punctuality recommended him strongly to Sir John and Horace.

Further particulars as to the antecedents of Fritz, apart from the excellent recommendation of the motor-car manufacturers, were not forthcoming, nor, in fact, needed, until the police came on the scene after the murder of Sir John Boulger; then Fritz was subjected to a series of strict questionings, which searching inquiries were only equalled by the adroit manner in which the chauffeur avoided giving any definite information on the subject.

"That chauffeur's a 'ot lot, in my opinion," ob-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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served Sergeant Patrick to an assistant at the conclusion of a bout of this nature with Fritz. "He's got something up his sleeve, or my name ain't Patrick."

But whatever it was that Fritz had "up his sleeve," he persevered in keeping it there, despite any persuasion on the part of Patrick to induce him to shake it down.

The Misses Boulger from the first took the keenest interest in Fritz; there was no doubt about it — his clean-shaven regularity of countenance, combined with a pair of fine blue eyes, attracted them considerably; this was greatly added to by a good figure — although he was not tall — and the exceeding politeness of his manner and address to them.

But what particularly ingratiated him with them, and led to their acquaintance taking another footing, was a certain mystery about him. The origin of the mystery was the following incident.

Zara and Ethel had been spending a tiring afternoon in the early spring shopping in Regent Street, and at the conclusion of their labours sought with thankfulness a certain tea-shop in the adjacent Bond Street.

It so happened that the motor had broken down in some way, and the repairs being beyond Fritz's powers — although he was a skilled mechanician — the car had been sent to the manufacturers. There-

fore Fritz at this period was enjoying a few days' well-earned rest.

The two sisters had no sooner settled themselves down in the tea-room of the Bond Street shop, and commenced to refresh themselves, when a fashionably-dressed lady and gentleman entered and seated themselves at a table on the opposite side of the room.

The lady was young and exceedingly pretty, and bore about her that stamp of good breeding and high tone which is unmistakable. The two Miss Boulgers having taken in every item of her clothing, from her *chic* hat to the colour of the dainty silk petticoat which peeped from beneath her dress, turned their joint attention to the gentleman who accompanied her.

They immediately exchanged glances of astonishment. Well, but very quietly dressed, in the ordinary costume of a man about town, there could be no possibility of a doubt as to who the gentleman was. It was Fritz, their chauffeur!

At first the Miss Boulgers, with that bad taste which is unfortunately associated but too often with dealings in huck-a-back toweling and cheap lines in drapery — a residuum which had resisted the fine straining of two "finishing" educational establishments — essayed a slight mutual smile of derision, but this smile was checked in its inception by the manner in which Fritz was treated by the lady.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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Now, there are ladies who bear the stamp of their birth and breeding in their every action, from the tones of their voices to the tinkle of a bangle; and there are those ladies, also, who *don't*.

This particular lady, sitting with Fritz the chauffeur, *did*. Neither Zara nor Ethel Boulger for one moment doubted, after their close inspection, that she belonged to the higher ranks of life. When — although the two spoke in German — they heard the young lady address their chauffeur as "Fritz," and speak to him as an equal, he rose in their estimation immeasurably, and the anomaly of his wearing a tall hat was no longer an anomaly at all.

It was very evident that Fritz and the lady were discoursing on some subject highly interesting to both.

The curriculum at the highly expensive finishing schools which had sheltered the Miss Boulgers had included German, but not the German of conversation. Though they could catch a word here and there, yet the apparently highly-entertaining exchange of ideas between Fritz and his companion might have been conducted in Syro-Chaldaic for all the sense they could make of it, strain their ears as they would.

The lady rose to go at last, and to their astonishment, Fritz, when taking leave of her, addressed her as "Marguerite!" The lady, having pulled down

## FRITZ

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rather a thick veil, and given it that little scientific twist under the chin, departed in a fast hansom. Fritz did not follow her. He returned into the tea-room after seeing her off, and, with a polite bow, asked the Misses Boulger how they did!

For a moment, and a moment only, Zara was inclined to resent what she considered as an affront, but a glance at Fritz's exceedingly well-fitting clothes and spotless linen, and above all his perfectly refined and easy manner, decided her to take another course. She acknowledged his salutation with a smile, and motioned to the empty chair beside her.

For a full quarter-of-an-hour they talked as if motors and chauffeurs were things not yet created. Indeed, the quarter-of-an-hour extended itself to half-an-hour, during which Ethel Boulger had received perhaps more than her full share of attention, and had come to the conclusion in her own mind that Fritz the chauffeur possessed the finest blue eyes and the whitest teeth she had ever come across in a man.

The conversation rigorously excluded motors, but was animated on other subjects. It appeared that Fritz went to the Opera sometimes, and was an enthusiastic musician, like so many of his countrymen. Listening to his exceedingly entertaining conversation, amid the very good English of which occasionally a slight German accent peeped out, the two

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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girls quite forgot that they were talking to their father's chauffeur. To have occupied such a position with his coachman would have simply turned them both blue with horror.

This was the beginning of a dual existence for Fritz with regard to the young ladies. There was the Fritz, flat-capped and uniformed, who drove the motor, and was never spoken to in terms of familiarity; and there was the Fritz of Bond Street, tall-hatted, well-dressed and distinctive as to his spotless linen, who was always met with pleasure and addressed as "Mr. Hoffmann," albeit these meetings were of a furtive kind, generally in the most secluded room of some fashionable tea-shop, or in a by-walk in Kensington Gardens.

The murder of Sir John Boulger, of course, put a stop to all this, and in addition, on the morning after the conversation between Horace Boulger and his sisters, Fritz, upon presenting himself for orders, was told that his young master wished to see him in the library. He came out of that secluded apartment ten minutes after with a very melancholy countenance, the recipient of a month's notice to leave.

As he passed the dining-room on his way out, a light hand was thrust through the door and laid upon his arm, a soft voice whispered —

"Never mind, Fritz," it said, "take this paper.

## FRITZ

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If you go to the address on it, Mr. Featherstone will engage you."

Then the arm was withdrawn, and the dining-room door closed.

Fritz opened the folded paper and read the address:

“ Hugh Featherstone, Esq.,  
95, Dover Street,  
Piccadilly.”

That very morning, his services not being required, he repaired to Dover Street, and was informed that Mr. Featherstone had gone to his office in the City. Thither Fritz quickly followed him, to a first floor in a spacious building standing in a lane leading out of Cornhill.

Mr. Hugh Featherstone was the senior partner in a young but exceedingly enterprising firm of stockbrokers.

He was a member of what is called a “good” family; that is to say, he had a distant cousin a peer, a titled uncle or two, and the usual number of poor relations, which appear to be allotted by an All-Wise Providence to those who have a little to give. Hugh Featherstone and Horace Boulger had foregathered at Harrow, thence their paths had diverged, Hugh proceeding to a stool in a stockbroker’s office, and Horace to a tutor’s to prepare for the University.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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But they had always kept their friendship alive, and this had become a much more important matter to Featherstone after he had been introduced to Ethel Boulger, with whom he fell hopelessly in love at their first meeting.

Hugh Featherstone had risen rapidly; the atmosphere of the Stock Exchange suited his adventurous temperament. On the death of an uncle he had started a firm of his own.

Fritz was not kept waiting long; he was soon shown by a clerk into Mr. Featherstone's private office.

He found there a tallish slight gentleman in mourning, dressed in a closely-buttoned frock-coat, with a clean-shaven face, and an eyeglass apparently glued into his left eye.

Fritz having stated his business, Mr. Featherstone took up a black-edged letter lying among others on his table.

"I had a note about you," he said, "from Miss Ethel Boulger this morning. She recommended me to give you a trial."

A few preliminaries being settled, Fritz found himself engaged to "drive" Mr. Featherstone on very satisfactory terms, and, at his request, withdrew to the West End to the garage at the back of Dover Street, there to inspect what was to be his new charge, the motor.

Mr. Featherstone, left to himself, made a note in

## FRITZ

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his diary of the new chauffeur's engagement, then opened a drawer and took out an ancient-looking document, which he had apparently thrust away on Fritz being announced. He spread the document before him and whistled.

"This is the very queerest start I've ever come across," he observed; "it beats cock-fighting. I must show it to Mrs. Beauclerk."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BURIED TREASURE

MRS. BEAUCLERK lived in one of those delightful flats just near the Albert Hall, overlooking Kensington Gardens, with a full view of the gilded sanctuary of Albert the Good in the foreground. She had occupied her flat exactly one month; that being the period which had elapsed since her return from her honeymoon.

Mrs. Beauclerk had been a young and pretty widow when her present husband, Hubert Beauclerk, the eminent King's Counsel, had met her as Mrs. Dawson at dinner at the house of a brother of the silken robe, and from that moment become her devoted slave.

Hubert Beauclerk, a solid-looking, clean-shaven man of excellent family, was said to be making an income at the Chancery Bar which had long since turned the corner of ten thousand a year. He was a Member of Parliament, much trusted by his Party, and, in virtue of that trust, a man who one day might sit upon the woolsack.

Mrs. Beauclerk — or Mrs. Dawson, as she then

## THE BURIED TREASURE

---

was — was congratulated on all hands upon her good fortune in securing such a husband, and it is highly probable that she shared this view of the situation herself, but being a woman of the world — and a clever one at that — she preferred when spoken to on the point to cast up her eyes and sigh, as if marriage were a very terrible affair indeed.

Very fine eyes had Mona Beauclerk, those soft-looking blue-grey eyes, which look so well when cast up in beseeching attitudes; it was probably some such attitude which had captivated Hubert Beauclerk.

These fine eyes of Mrs. Beauclerk's were much set off by a very pretty pink and white complexion, and soft, curling, light brown hair, which clung around her charming face like the setting of a pretty picture. For her figure, but one word was applicable in describing it, and that word was "perfect." Her late husband, as she was very ready to inform her friends, had been an Australian merchant, and had died in that dependency of the Crown after a married life of only a few months. She had then returned to England, and in a prolonged tour of the principal watering-places and haunts of pleasure, both at home and on the continent, had endeavored to assuage the grief of her bereavement, and — as some ill-natured people had remarked — provide herself with another husband.

Be this as it may, to her certainly came the other

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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husband, with hands full of gold and the light of love in his honest grey eyes.

Yes, Hubert Beauclerk was a man whom any woman might have been proud to call her husband, and Mona, in her impulsive way, perhaps was proud of him; but she was of the genus which is not apt to give itself away by an over-display of love when a little will do just as well.

On his part, Hubert was as happy in the possession of his *chic*, blue-eyed wife, despite his forty-eight years, as a young husband of twenty-one; perhaps with a greater depth of happiness and appreciation than any young man could show.

For the present they had settled down in the luxurious flat overlooking Kensington Gardens; it was convenient to the Law Courts and the Houses of Parliament, and therefore suited Hubert well; as for Mona, "any place suited her," she said, which was within ten minutes motor ride of Bond Street.

But the flat at Kensington was looked upon by both simply as the starting-point of their house-keeping; Mona had visions of a villa at Nice or Cannes, and Hubert had views about a house in his native county of Norfolk, with pheasant shooting fit for a king.

It was on a rather dull afternoon that Mrs. Beauclerk was sitting by the fire in her drawing-room watching the lamps twinkling out here and there below across the Gardens; a beautifully appointed

## THE BURIED TREASURE

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tea-table had just been placed before her, with one of those ingeniously constructed receptacles for all that is indigestible in the way of cakes, the highly-trained parlourmaid — Mrs. Beauclerk did not like menservants — after making up a glorious fire, left her to herself. Mrs. Beauclerk was pensive; she feared that no one would turn up to afternoon tea. The frown quickly disappeared, however, from her fair brow before the second cup of tea was reached; the electric bell, which denoted a visitor, tinkled merrily.

Rising, and giving a hasty glance at herself in the round glass over the fire-place, she quickly reseated herself, fervently hoping that her visitor would prove to be a man; in this she was not disappointed; the highly-trained parlourmaid entered and announced “Mr. Hugh Featherstone.”

“So delighted to find you at home,” he began, beaming through his unmovable eyeglass. “Have been looking forward to seeing you all day.”

“And why this feverish desire to see poor me?” Mrs. Beauclerk asked plaintively, sinking back in the soft cushions of her chair. “Whatever can you want to see *me* for?”

She eyed Hugh through her half-closed languorous lids with a look of satisfaction; he was a very pleasing-looking, if not handsome, man of about thirty.

“I have had the most curious adventure,” he

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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continued, "a most extraordinary experience, and I am simply *dying* to confide the whole matter to you. You know my implicit reliance upon your discretion and good sense?"

Mona nodded her head discreetly; she scented business in the air.

"Let me give you a cup of tea first," she suggested, "then you can tell me after."

She poured out a cup and handed it to him while she herself, leaning back in her chair, reached out her hand to a silver cigarette box, and taking one, lit it.

"Now," she continued when he had finished his tea, "take a cigarette and let me hear your news."

He did as he was bid, and with a lingering glance at a puff of smoke as it frittered into air, commenced his relation.

"You are aware," he began, "that I had an eccentric old uncle, Sir Rowland Featherstone, who lived the life of a hermit almost in an old house on Northumberland coast, not far from Morpeth."

She nodded amid the fragrant smoke rings of her cigarette.

"Well," he continued, "I was spending a part of my holidays with him last autumn, to shoot some of his pheasants. I was about the only person he did allow to shoot them. It so happened that we had three consecutive wet days, and I was at my

## THE BURIED TREASURE

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wits' end to amuse myself. I even tried to learn Diabolo!"

"You *must* have been hard up for an amusement," commented Mrs. Beauclerk, with a smile. "Go on."

"I tried everything I could think of," he proceeded, "and nearly quarrelled with my uncle, out of sheer *ennui*. However, I pulled myself together, and on the afternoon of the second day settled down to explore the library. I am of an inquisitive disposition, and I used the ladder to investigate the upper shelves of books, which appeared to me to have rested undisturbed for generations.

"I had pulled down and examined innumerable old books on the top of the steps for perhaps an hour, when an old, bulky volume took my fancy on the highest shelf of all. This I reached for, and although I grasped it in my hand, I overbalanced myself, and *down* I came."

"Poor Hugh!" interjected Mrs. Beauclerk.

"Oh, I wasn't hurt," he responded. "I almost fell on my feet, but the book slipped out of my hand and fell with a crash on the floor. When, a few moments afterwards, I went to pick it up, I found half the cover torn off in the fall, and this old document resting beside it."

He felt in his pocket and produced a folded sheet of parchment covered with writing. These with two other sheets attached to it he handed to Mona.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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Taking them in her hands she glanced at them, then shook her head and handed them back to him.

"All Greek to me, Hugh," she said. "I never could read legal documents."

"They are not legal documents," he answered.

"Then what are they?"

"They are the keys," he replied solemnly, "to a buried treasure of almost untold value."

She sat up quickly in her seat, and looked at him with wide-open eyes.

"Buried treasure!" she repeated. "Where is it?"

He opened the parchment again slowly, and looked towards her. "Listen," he said, "and you shall hear."

Spreading the document out on a small table by his side, he commenced to read it as follows —

"I, John Featherstone, goldsmith, being on the eve of a journey to my house of Netherleigh in the county of Northumberland — on which journey may God be my guide — sit me down this 26th day of the month of November, in the year of our Lord sixteen hundred and ninety-one, to unburthen my mind of certain weighty matters which have much oppressed it this three years past.

"His gracious Majesty King William the Third, having deigned to be well pleased with the healthful situation of this my Manor House, called Notting-

## THE BURIED TREASURE

---

ham House, nigh unto the village of Kensington, and having graciously set his mind on making it into a Royal Palace, I have dutifully consented to sell unto his Majesty the said house for the sum of fifteen thousand pounds, full money of the realm of England.

“ But before leaving this pleasant house and village in which I have spent so many years it seemeth to me a necessity that I should commit to writing certain particulars of the great treasure and other the jewels committed to my care by his Majesty James the Second, heretofore King of England, before his flight into parts abroad. It came about in this-wise —

“ On the 13th day of December in the year sixteen hundred and eighty-eight, I sat in this very room at eventide listening to the roaring of the winds without, amid the great trees. It must have been nigh unto nine o’clock when I heard the galloping of steeds on the high-road, which came nearer and nearer, and presently a coach stopped at my door, the two horses that drew it steaming in the cold night air.

“ Going forth to my door to welcome these late visitors I became aware of two cloaked men wearing masks, followed by two others who bore between them a great oaken chest.

“ The two first men pushed by me, to my great concern, for I took them for highwaymen, and

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

entered my parlour as if well knowing the ways of my house, the two men with the chest following them.

“ This chest being set down, and the bearers gone, one of the two masked men closed the door, and it was then that the taller of the two unmasked, putting aside his cloak also, and then, to my great amazement, I beheld his Majesty, King James himself. Such a visit would not have surprised me by day, for I having been for many years goldsmith to the Court, before I forsook my trade to my son, and led a country life, and having served King Charles the Second of saintly memory as well as King James when Duke of York, such a visit would have been in nowise surprising. His Majesty's companion casting aside his cloak also I beheld.

“ Whilst I stood with apprehension in my heart — for I feared all was not well — his Majesty King James addressed me in his bluff sailor's fashion.

“ ‘ Featherstone,’ said he, ‘ I have come hither to thee to-night at some risk to confide in thee a matter of much urgency. You know full well that the clouds are gathering very black on my horizon, and it may be that I have to fly into France.’

“ ‘ Heaven forbid! your Majesty,’ I said, but yet I knew in my heart it must come to that.

“ ‘ Whether that shall come or not,’ continued his Majesty, ‘ I have thought it prudent to bring to thee, for safe custody and keeping, this chest.’

## THE BURIED TREASURE

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“ His Majesty motioned his companion from the room, that he might have my private ear.

“ See here,’ he went on, producing a slip of parchment, ‘ here is the tale of the contents of this chest.’

“ I took the slip from his Majesty and started as I read it.

“ It was a list of a portion of the Crown jewels, and included in it the great yellow diamond lately given to his Majesty by the East Indian merchants. Besides, there were emeralds, pearls, and other jewels of great price, and the sum of ten thousand golden guineas.

“ And what would your Majesty please in regard to this chest?’ I asked in a trembling voice.

“ I confide this treasure to thy keeping,’ King James answered, giving me the key of the chest, ‘ until such time as I may command thee to send it to me in safety.’

“ Then and there I wrote King James a full receipt for the chest, promising him that I would guard it until such time as he should make known to me his commands.

“ With that he departed with his attendant.

“ As is known to all the world within ten days of that time King James had fled the country.

“ Meanwhile I kept fast the chest, hiding it away in a secret cellar, the entrance to which is known but to myself.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"The months passed, and there came no message from King James; their gracious Majesties King William and his royal Spouse Queen Mary ascended the throne of England. Then in haste, and not before, came word from King James, in Ireland, that I was to send his treasure to him.

"Of those who read this I would ask — 'Have you a conscience?' Here was I, an honest citizen, who had sworn allegiance to their gracious Majesties King William and Queen Mary, asked to aid in a rebellion against them. I felt my head already on Temple Bar or London Bridge.

"Besides, there was a matter of account between King James and my humble self, and a balance of reckoning due from the late King Charles of saintly memory.

"I did prevaricate with this messenger of King James. I told him I could not send *in safety* as King James had commanded me, and the man, despite his expostulations, had to leave satisfied with my words, and the few golden pieces I gave him for his journey back to Ireland.

"Other messengers came from time to time, and I gave them like answers, and in the meantime I cast up the sum of King James' indebtedness to me, and that of his royal brother King Charles, and I found that King James owed me seven hundred guineas, and his brother, the late King Charles, nigh upon a thousand.

## THE BURIED TREASURE

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“ These sums I did not scruple to take from the store of gold in the chest and place it among my own fortune in another place together with a yearly sum of ten guineas per centum for the usure of the same. Those used to the ways of commerce will understand me and commend my prudence in this matter.

“ The rest of the gold, with the jewels, I locked away in the oaken coffer, after comparing the contents with the tale given me by King James, and finding it correct. Odds bodkins! but that great yellow diamond is worth a king’s ransom, and there are other gems there not far behind it in value.

“ But being now, by the sale of my house, compelled to seek another home, I have taken counsel with my good son — a Councillor of London and like to become an Alderman — and have decided to return to my native place, where I have already purchased me a goodly estate.

“ Being the only person possessed of the secret of the jewels and money deposited with me by King James, I, after much deliberation, decided to bury this treasure in the disused gravel-pit on my land which runneth the other side of the high-road. And I am strengthened in this determination by the great depth and secluded nature of the pit.

“ This determination I have now carried out and completed yesternight, with much labour and contrivance, digging a deep hole by day, and carrying

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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the great chest there empty, by night, and each night after carrying to it the jewels and money.

"Now all are hidden in the ground and safely covered, in the spot indicated on the plan which I shall affix to this document with the tale of the contents of the chest.

"This parchment I shall stitch up in the cover of my Bible, leaving in my will the same to my beloved son, with some indication of the secret which shall be hidden within it.

"And now at daybreak I begin my long journey to Northumberland, on which may God speed me.

"JOHN FEATHERSTONE."

Hugh laid down the parchment and looked at Mrs. Beauclerk.

"Well?" that lady queried.

"Well, it's like this," continued Hugh, "the old gentleman who wrote this document forgot to make a will, and died intestate. His property was administered by his son, then an alderman — and afterwards Lord Mayor of London, and a baronet. I have seen all about that at Durham."

There was silence for a few moments, then Mrs. Beauclerk burst out excitedly.

"But how about the treasure?"

"That's just where it is," replied Hugh, "how about the treasure? There is very little doubt that the treasure remains just where the old gentleman

## THE BURIED TREASURE

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buried it. Had it been discovered a record of it would undoubtedly have been preserved, and no such record exists."

"Oh, Hugh," cried Mrs. Beauclerk, clasping her hands, "just think of that yellow diamond!"

She checked herself in a moment, however. "We must keep this matter *absolutely* to ourselves," she added. "I shall not mention it even to my husband. Have *you* told anybody?" She asked the question with evident anxiety.

"No," he answered deliberately. "You know how I trust you. I determined to tell you first."

"I am glad of that," she replied with a sigh of relief. "One never knows what comes out of such a thing as this."

"What *could* come out of it?" he asked.

She considered before she answered.

"Why should not we try to find the 'treasure'?" she replied presently. "It cannot be difficult if you have the plan."

Hugh leant back in his chair and gave way to a fit of laughter.

"You forget," he said presently, "that the gravel-pit was filled in, years and years ago, to build houses on."

Her face fell, but soon recovered itself.

"Have you any idea where the gravel-pit was?" she asked.

"As far as I can form any opinion at present,"

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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he replied, "it must have been where Kensington Square now is."

A ring came at the entrance door, and Mona looked at her watch.

"That's Hubert," she said; "now not a word to him about the document. You must dine here, and we will have a long talk after, when Hubert goes to the study to get up his briefs."

"But Hugh — " she added.

"What?"

"You might ask him a few questions about the Crown jewels. He is a regular walking encyclopædia, especially where history is concerned."

Hubert Beauclerk, coming in tired from a consultation, sat watching his wife pour out a cup of fresh tea for him, with the look of a young lover; the contemplation of her blue eyes and fair hair seemed to put fresh life into him after the day's toil.

After an exchange of platitudes on everyday topics, Hugh Featherstone asked Beauclerk a question.

"I know you're a big swell at history," he said; "perhaps you can tell me something I want to know. Did King James the Second make away with any of the Crown jewels?"

Beauclerk, with his tea-cup in his hand, looked up at him and smiled.

"What on earth have you taken up that line for?" he asked.

## THE BURIED TREASURE

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"Oh, I was talking on the subject with a friend, and the point turned up."

"Well," continued Beauclerk, "I am in a position to give you a little information on the point, because years ago I happened to take an interest in the Crown jewels myself, and read the matter up. Yes, James the Second certainly *did* make away with some of the Crown jewels."

"And were they ever recovered?"

"*Some* were. The bulk of them, including, I think, some of the Scotch Regalia, were willed by Cardinal Stuart to George the Fourth in eighteen hundred and seven; but there were others which were never recovered."

"Do you happen to know what they were?" asked Featherstone.

Beauclerk considered a few moments.

"As far as I recollect," he answered, "those which were never recovered included a very valuable gift made by the East India Company, or whatever represented it in those days, of pearls and emeralds, on the accession of James the Second, and I believe among it was a great yellow diamond, supposed to be of enormous value."

Hugh Featherstone and Mrs. Beauclerk exchanged glances.

"A great yellow diamond!" she repeated, clasping her hands. "How lovely!"

## CHAPTER V

### THE PRIDE OF SCOTLAND YARD

OWEN FRISNER was about the most unlikely looking person to be a detective that could well be imagined.

The son of a naturalized German father by a Welsh wife, he was a thin, cadaverous-looking person of thirty-one or thirty-two, with a decided stoop, and the general appearance of an underpaid city clerk.

His appearance was by no means a libel; he had begun life at a wharfinger's desk in Southwark, but being thrown out of work by the failure of his employer, spent two months walking about the streets of London looking for a job, without finding it. Then, when nearly at his last shilling some friend had suggested the Metropolitan Police, and after considerable difficulty, and just scraping through his medical examination, he was received as a member of that force.

No portrait has been preserved of his appearance in the regulation helmet and "blue" at this period. His beat, during the short time he did active duty as an ordinary constable, lay somewhere about the

## THE PRIDE OF SCOTLAND YARD

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back roads of Dulwich, and was both solitary and melancholy. The extraordinary ability, however, displayed by him in dealing with a case of burglary which came his way, brought him to the notice of his superiors, and resulted in a very brief period in his forsaking the beaten paths of Dulwich for a more exalted and adventurous career at Scotland Yard, beginning as a subordinate, but subsequently mounting the ladder of promotion two steps at a time.

His methods in the detection of crime were of so extraordinary and original a character that he was classed by his intimates as a "born" detective, a man to whom the unravelling of the knotty motives of human nature came as easily as shelling peas, and in addition he had this wonderful recommendation, he very seldom made a mistake.

Frisner, it has been said, was probably the most polite man Scotland Yard has ever known; he would have taken off his hat to a condemned criminal on his way to the scaffold and congratulated him on the fineness of the morning, had he previously passed through his hands in the way of business; and it was said he was always ready to apologize to the victims of his skill if their bad luck caused them to be led before a severe judge.

In the witness box he was apologetic, and with an obvious *bias* in favour of the prisoner, yet his testimony was almost always of that deadly, com-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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plete nature, which generally puts a rope round a murderer's neck.

Returning from a prolonged visit to Paris, where his habits of politeness had earned him golden opinions among the French police, he was confronted with the mystery of Sir John Boulger's murder.

Whether it was that the delightful life of Paris — he was an accomplished linguist *inter alia* — had estranged him from his normal surroundings at Scotland Yard, or that the case at first appeared hopeless, be that as it may, beyond taking the usual notes, such as he would take of every important case brought before him, he made no move in the matter for more than a month after his return; then one sunny afternoon in early September he took it into his head to jump into a hansom and drive down to the late Sir John Boulger's house in Queen's Gate, having previously ascertained by telephone that the family were away from town.

Received by the urbane Simmonds — in the *deshabille* of a tweed suit — he was shown over the house, with no fear of interruption.

First of all minutely examining the room in which the crime was committed, he carried his investigations all over the large house, but not one word of his convictions — if he had any — did he convey to the expectant Simmonds.

Not even the chimneys of the rooms escaped his attentions; by means of an electric flash-lamp which

## THE PRIDE OF SCOTLAND YARD

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he carried in his pocket he examined them all minutely, poking his thin, intellectual-looking head up every flue in the house.

He seemed to spend more time in Miss Ethel Boulger's bedroom than in any other room in the house. It seemed to possess a deadly fascination for him while poking into every corner of it with a walking-stick, and not forgetting the usual inspection of the chimney.

This seemed to afford him such abundant food for reflection that Simmonds quite decided that he intended spending the remainder of the afternoon on his knees before it. But when, however, he at last withdrew his head and hands — much besmirched with soot — it appeared to Simmonds that he brought down something bright in one of the latter, and hastily wrapped it in a pocket-handkerchief.

Even when the house was done with, the roof had to be inspected, and a full hour was spent among the slates and sheet lead. Frisner did not scruple to climb over the neighbouring roofs, his slight, sinuous body lending itself to this sort of work. The corpulent Simmonds did not, however, follow him in these peregrinations, but surveyed his doings wonderingly from a safe position, with his back to a chimney stack.

It was on one of these excursions over the next roof that Simmonds saw the detective carefully detach a small piece of lace from a nail in the low parti-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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wall, and after carefully contemplating it for some minutes shut it away in a compartment of his large pocketbook. Then returning to the butler's side of the wall Frisner seated himself in the gutter, and fell there and then into what appeared to be a brown study of the situation. Simmonds, anxious to get down to his tea, sat watching him, noisily shifting from one foot to another, and occasionally offering some remark to attract his attention; but he might just as well have addressed his remarks to the winds for all the notice the detective took of them. His whole faculties seemed absorbed in the contemplation of some deep and puzzling question.

After expending half-an-hour in fruitless endeavours to attract the officer's notice, Simmonds took the bull by the horns and went down and had his tea, leaving the trap-door in the roof open for the detective to follow.

Hearing nothing of him, however, he returned after an interval of three quarters of an hour to find Frisner precisely as he had left him, the only change being that he had apparently been working out what looked like an algebraical problem with a fountain pen on the finger-nails of his left hand. The butler's advent, however, seemed to arouse him, he came to himself again with a deep sigh, and gratefully accepted the offer of tea. He followed Simmonds submissively down to the library, stopping only on the way, at the butler's suggestion, to cleanse

## THE PRIDE OF SCOTLAND YARD

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his face and hands in a basin in one of the bath-rooms. This done he descended to the library, and after contemplating a tea of bread and butter, with almost a school-boy's delight, plaintively asked Simmonds whether they had such a thing as a pot of jam in the house. Being supplied with this delicacy, he ate two large platefuls of bread and butter liberally spread with it and topped up with four thick slices of plum cake, also enriched with a thick layer of raspberry jam.

This ample meal completed, Frisner shook both Simmonds and the cook warmly by the hand and returned forthwith to Scotland Yard, leaving behind him, to the servants' disgust, not one single observation which by any manner of means could have been construed into an opinion on the subject of the murder of Sir John Boulger.

## CHAPTER VI

### 104, KENSINGTON SQUARE

"PREMISING that the plan is correct, and my working out equally in order, there is little doubt," observed Hugh Featherstone, a week after his last interview with Mona Beauclerk, "that the treasure referred to by my ancestor, the old Kensington goldsmith, lies buried under the garden of No. 104, Kensington Square, at a depth of probably seventy to a hundred feet. Those gravel-pits were exceedingly deep, so they tell me at the South Kensington Museum."

They were lingering over luncheon, watching the continuous stream of carriages and motors in the high-road below, as they smoked cigarettes and sipped their coffee and liqueurs.

Mona had set aside the whole of that afternoon, by appointment, to discuss the question of the hidden jewels.

"Seventy or a hundred feet deep!" she repeated.  
"Why such a depth?"

"Why, you see the gravel-pit was partly filled in soon after, and houses built on the top."

"104, Kensington Square," said Mona medita-

tively. "Do you know anything about the house?"

"Yes; I've carefully inspected it inside and out. It's to let."

Mrs. Beauclerk tapped her foot impatiently on the floor, and took two or three quick little puffs at her cigarette.

"Hugh," she said at last decisively, "we'll take that house."

"What on earth for?"

"Listen to me," she continued, relinquishing her cigarette, and folding her white hands, glittering with jewels, on the table before her. "The chances are about a hundred to one that the old chest and its contents have lain undisturbed from the day your ancestor placed them there until the present time. I am going to try and recover them."

"You!"

"Yet, *I*. The matter will be no greater than sinking a well in a country place, although, no doubt, I shall have to pay a higher price for it."

"But, my dear Mrs. Beauclerk," urged Featherstone, "*you* surely cannot want the money nor the jewels. You have an abundance of both."

She nodded her fair head with determination.

"I want that big yellow diamond, and what's more, I'm going to have it. The whole matter fascinates me. Will you help me?"

Hugh leant back in his chair and laughed heartily.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"Upon my word, Mona," he said presently, "you are a most sporting lady. I think your mood is contagious. Yes, I'll help you, certainly. What do you want me to do?"

"Well, first of all I want you to take 104, Kensington Square, for me. I, of course, will find the means."

"Now, look here, Mona," Hugh answered quickly. "I've a suggestion to make; let us be partners in this matter."

She considered for a few moments with her eyes on the gilded effigy of good Prince Albert, over the way.

"Very well," she answered at last, "let it be so; but I presume you do not particularly want the yellow diamond?"

He made her a little bow over his finger-glass.

"I resign all claim to it in your favour," he said. "It would be useless to me, and I should only sell it; whereas in your case you could wear it, like a queen."

She suitably acknowledged the compliment, and lit another cigarette.

"By Jove! though," burst out Featherstone, "I never thought of one thing."

"What is that?" she asked quietly.

"Why, as soon as we get these jewels and the rest of it to the surface they will be claimed by the Government on behalf of the Crown."

She smiled a little contemptuously.

"Are you going to tell them?" she asked, with her blue eyes wide open.

"No, of course not; but they may find out."

"How will they find out?"

"Why, you can't sink a well in the middle of a populous part of London without creating some remark."

"True, but I shall not advertise the fact. Is it not a common thing for people to have the drains of their houses thoroughly overhauled and attended to, and does not this sometimes take months and months? You will find that the drains of 104, Kensington Square will require the most minute attention."

"Well, Mona," replied Hugh, laughing heartily, "I think you ought to have been a diplomatist or a detective."

The cigarette dropped out of Mrs. Beauclerk's hand at the word, and she turned a white scared face towards him.

"Don't say that," she said. "I hate the very sound of the name." Then, pulling herself together immediately, she asked him, with a smile, "How long have we known one another, Hugh?"

"About three years, isn't it?"

"*About* three years?" she queried; "don't you know in your heart the exact date of our first meeting?"

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"Of course I do," Hugh replied quickly, resting his hand on hers, which she at once withdrew.

There was a pause while he sat smoking and looking at her; at last he asked —

"Mona, why didn't you marry me?"

She turned her fine eyes upon him compassionately.

"Poor Hugh!" she answered, "you couldn't afford to marry then, could you? Your uncle was still alive."

"But it would have been all right had you trusted me and waited," he urged; "things would have come all right."

She got up quickly from her seat, and threw her cigarette into the fire-place.

"What's the good of harking back, Hugh?" she asked in rather a petulant voice. "We have got to take things as they are. You are happy enough, and will find a nice wife some day."

Hugh shook his head; but at the back of it was a consoling vision of Ethel Boulger.

"Well, don't look so sentimental, at any rate," Mona cried mockingly; "but pull yourself together and go round to the estate agent's and secure 104, Kensington Square."

## CHAPTER VII

### LUNCH AT THE RITZ

FRITZ HOFFMANN found his new situation with Mr. Hugh Featherstone by no means a disagreeable one. He bowled his master down to the City each morning, and fetched him again about five, but between whiles, his time was very much his own. Being a mechanician, he of course had nothing to do with the cleaning of the motor, except to see that it was kept in proper order by a subordinate; if any little matter connected with its interior working required attention, he took off his coat and did it.

But very often, on his return to the garage before twelve, he simply changed into plain clothes and took a walk down Regent Street or Bond Street — this was his idea of amusing himself; he had no low tastes or leanings of any sort.

It is not surprising that he occasionally met the daughters of his late master, the Misses Zara and Ethel Boulger. The latter he met alone one sunny morning about a fortnight after he had entered the service of Mr. Featherstone, when he had extended his walk into Kensington Gardens. He walked with her in the direction of Queen's Gate.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"I particularly want to have a long, quiet chat with you," said Ethel, when they had walked together some ten minutes, "and for that reason I suggest that you should come and lunch with me to-morrow at, say, the Restaurant of the Ritz Hotel; what do you say?"

"I can only say I shall be delighted," he answered.

"Very well, then. I will take a quiet corner table and wait for you there to-morrow at two."

She took a hasty leave of him, and flitted across the road down Queen's Gate.

Punctually at two the following day Fritz strode through the Restaurant at the Ritz, not without attracting admiring glances from the opposite sex, at his easy carriage and good figure.

At a table in a secluded corner, well sheltered by an umbrageous palm, was Ethel Boulger, a slight pink blush on her face, at the novelty and consequent excitement of her assignation.

Fritz took the vacant seat opposite her and they talked banalities during the progress of the meal. Not until the waiter had left them to themselves did Ethel lean towards him and address him almost in a whisper.

"Fritz," she said softly, using his Christian name for the first time during their surreptitious acquaintance, "I want you to give me a promise."

## LUNCH AT THE RITZ

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There was no question about her beauty as she lent across the table; Fritz, already much enamoured of her, felt it thrill every fibre in his nature. Her hand lay on the table quite near his; he covered it with his own and she did not withdraw it.

"I will promise you anything in the world," he murmured.

"Well, I am going to speak of something very serious," she continued, her face losing its colour. "I am going to speak of that *awful morning*."

He nodded his head solemnly; he understood what she meant. "You mean the morning of the day on which your father was murdered?"

She bent her head slowly, her face going whiter.

"What is the promise you ask me to give?" Fritz said presently.

"You know that father said many hard things that morning, especially to me," she proceeded; "the discovery of our meetings had been a great blow to him."

"I remember it perfectly," answered Fritz.

"Had he lived," continued Ethel, her lip trembling, "I have but little doubt that he would have carried out his threat of altering his will. Such was the result of some wretched busybody's interference between father and daughter!"

Fritz sat looking at her, his face paling too; slowly he withdrew his hand from hers and passed it ab-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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sently across his forehead. Then he seemed to recollect himself and changed the current of his thoughts.

"Did you ever discover who the person was who told Sir John?" he asked.

"I haven't a doubt who it was. I could tell something very interesting about *that*, if I choose," she replied, smiling half triumphantly to herself as women will do when they think they hold an important secret, "but I won't mention it to anybody," she added.

They sat looking into each other's faces for fully a minute in silence; he with a look of doubt on his, she deep in thought.

"I want you to keep the incidents of that stormy interview with my father a secret," she asked presently. "I want your lips to be absolutely closed on the subject."

He had a puzzled look on his face as he gave her one syllable in answer.

"Why?"

"For this reason; Frisner the great detective has arrived back in England, and has taken up the case; if by any chance he should hear of my father's quarrel with me, it might become public. Do you understand?"

"I understand perfectly, but how about your sister, Miss Zara?"

"She knows nothing of it. You will remember

## LUNCH AT THE RITZ

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that my father only knew of my being seen with you. He did not know that Zara and I used to meet you together. I thought it better not to tell Zara."

"Very well, Miss Ethel," he answered, "I will promise you that I will never mention a word concerning that most unfortunate interview."

"You quite understand that my only motive is to avoid scandal?" she asked quickly.

"I quite understand."

She sat looking at him and trying to imagine what he was thinking about.

"Who was that pretty young lady you were having tea with," she asked at last, "the day we first met you in the Bond Street tea-shop?"

His face broke into a pleased smile.

"Oh! that was an old friend of mine," he answered cheerfully; "we were children together."

"She's very pretty."

"Yes, she is nice looking," he agreed.

"Do you mind telling me her name? I suppose she is a countrywoman of yours," suggested Ethel.

He considered for quite a long time before he answered.

"Her name is Marguerite," he said at last. "Miss Marguerite Brun," he added desperately; "she is a countrywoman of mine, in a way."

There was a pause.

"Why don't you smoke?" she asked at last. "A

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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man does not look happy after lunch unless he is smoking."

He took out his cigarette case, and she refusing it, he selected a cigarette, and put it between his lips. Taking a match from the stand she struck it, and lit the cigarette.

"Tell me," she said, as she did so, "do you often drive Mr. Featherstone to see Mrs. Beauclerk?"

Taken completely off his guard he answered at once:

"Yes, often; several times a week."

She took the stump of the wax match which Fritz had blown out, and dug it viciously into the table-cloth.

"Several times a week," she repeated, her red lips drawn over her white teeth in a forced smile; "he must be very fond of her to do that."

Fritz recollect ed at once that he was discussing his master's affairs, a proceeding which he had been distinctly warned against. He sat looking at his pretty companion, who still gave vicious digs at the table-cloth with the match stump.

"And takes her out in the motor-car, I expect," she said at last, raising her eyes and looking Fritz full in the face. "That must be delightful."

Fritz looked back at her, with a glance, half admiration, half amusement on his face, and slightly shook his head.

## LUNCH AT THE RITZ

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" You will not tell me," she asked impatiently, " you are going to be cross?"

" I am not a bit cross," he answered, " but I mustn't tell my master's secrets."

" Very well," she replied, rising from her chair, with a pretended air of indifference. " I won't bother you with any more questions. But I can absolutely rely upon your keeping your promise, tell me that."

" You may absolutely rely upon it," he answered. " I will say nothing about the interview with your father."

She held out her hand to him with a coquettish look in her eyes. " Will you be at the same place in Kensington Gardens the day after to-morrow at twelve?" she asked.

" With pleasure," he answered with a smile and a bow.

" Then *au revoir*, Fritz," she said.

" *Au revoir*," he answered.

He walked with her to the door and saw her into a cab, then took a stroll down Piccadilly and turned into the Green Park. There, seated on a bench, he turned all the incidents of the luncheon over in his mind; his dark face grew grim and stern as he did so. He took the walking-stick he carried, and dug it viciously into the ground before him.

" As I am a living man," he muttered to himself,

## **THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY**

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“I saw her looking through the curtains of the drawing-room with a white, drawn face, like the one she showed at the luncheon table, as I was leaving her father just before he was murdered, and yet, my God! I love her!”

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE COLLISION IN THE TUBE

FRITZ and Ethel Boulger met now almost daily, generally in that secluded portion of Kensington Gardens in the neighborhood of the Round Pond. Here, sitting under the old trees as the autumn leaves came rustling down, they discoursed on many subjects, themselves especially.

A born flirt, Ethel did not allow herself any expression of feeling towards the handsome chauffeur. She listened to his protestations of love — for it had come to that — with a pleased smile about her red lips, but she told him nothing in reply.

When he had ceased speaking, and might reasonably have expected an answer of some sort from her, she said nothing, but sat digging the ferrule of her little umbrella in the ground, ever with that gratified smile about her mobile mouth which *just* showed her white, regular teeth.

The incongruity of their positions did not now appear to worry her in the slightest; she took it for granted that Fritz was a gentleman who for some reason which he did not think fit to disclose was obliged to earn his living as a chauffeur, and as far

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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as she could see, it did not appear to be a disagreeable way of doing it, by any means.

But Fritz though apparently satisfied with the state of affairs existing between them, began to show signs of great anxiety and worry; he would sit looking at her under the old trees by the Round Pond for minutes together, until she, turning, would offer him, after the manner of young ladies, that insignificant and insulting sum of one penny for his thoughts.

One morning when the great trees were bathed in the soft autumn sunlight, bringing out with beautiful distinctness the soft brown variations of their foliage, Ethel turned to Fritz in one of his reveries and abruptly asked a question.

“Have you ever been to the Tower of London?”

Fritz woke as from a dream, and sat looking at her, until she repeated the question.

“No,” he answered at last, “I have never been there.”

“Neither have I,” she responded, “since I was a child. I think it would be great fun to go. What do you say?”

“I would go with you anywhere,” he answered, trying to take her hand, “but why do you particularly wish to go to the Tower of London? It is in the middle of the City. The worst part of it.”

“Oh! I think it would be great fun,” she an-

## THE COLLISION IN THE TUBE

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swered, "it's so old and quaint, and so out of the way. Nobody would see us there."

He half-smiled at her answer.

"I am sorry for many reasons," he replied, "that the latter qualification should be an attraction to you, but I admit that it cannot be helped."

"No, it cannot be helped," she answered, "and we must make the best of it. Let us go to-morrow by the Tube Railway; it will be secluded, and no one will see us; I shall simply love it."

He agreed readily, and settled their place of meeting.

"I hope I am not causing you inconvenience, Fritz?" she asked later, as they were parting. "Mr Featherstone does not want you particularly to-morrow morning?" She gave a nod towards the great block of flats near the Albert Hall. "No appointment *there*, I suppose?"

Fritz answered her quickly.

"No, no appointment at all. Mr. Featherstone will not want me until the afternoon."

The question annoyed him; they scarcely ever met but she tried him with some subtle inquiry concerning his master's doing and Mrs. Beauclerk.

They met the next day, and journeyed by the rushing projectile-like train through the Tube to the station near the Tower, Ethel in her fashionable black attire sitting squeezed up in a corner of the

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

long carriage enjoying herself immensely, apparently, in the novel situation.

They passed together the gateway of the old grey fortress, and were taken charge of in the usual way by a blue Yeoman of the Guard. Then they spent over an hour wandering through the old armouries and gruesome prisons.

It was nearly two o'clock before they strolled out again on to Tower Hill, and Fritz suggested jumping in a hansom and driving to a restaurant for lunch.

"No, no," answered Ethel quickly, "I *must* be home to lunch. It won't matter if I am late, we will go back by the Tube. I love it, and besides a hansom would never do. We should be seen."

Fritz of course agreeing, they walked back to the Tube station together. It was the luncheon hour in the City, and the trains were almost empty. With the exception of an old white-haired gentleman eating sandwiches out of a paper bag, the corridor compartment they entered was empty.

They rushed back as they came through the draught and blackness of the iron tube, and all went well until they had passed the second station: then the train gradually slowed down and eventually stopped. The utter stillness, after the incessant rattle of the fast travelling, fell upon them almost like a shock.

There was a feeling of utter loneliness and isola-

## THE COLLISION IN THE TUBE

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tion from the rest of mankind, being shut up deep in the earth in that iron tube. It reminded them very uncomfortably of being buried alive but for the brilliant lights of the train. There was absolute silence but for the steady mastication of the old gentleman, their sole companion in the long compartment as he steadily ate his sandwiches.

"Some delay in the line, sir, I suppose?" suggested Fritz, turning to the old man with a smile. "Not often a Tube train stops between stations."

The old gentleman was turning towards him, laboriously disposing of the morsel of sandwich then under treatment, before replying, when there came a whirring sound in the Tube, far in rear of the train, but rapidly approaching; then within ten seconds there was a frightful shock and crash, and every light in the train went out. At once there arose piercing cries and screams from the rear part of the train. Fritz sitting in the front corner of the corridor was thrown violently forward and Ethel against him; the latter gave one loud shriek and threw her arms round him for protection.

Fortunately both were unhurt, although the glass of the corridor windows had shivered all around them; Fritz was on his feet in a moment reassuring Ethel. Absolute pitch darkness of course prevailed.

Detaching himself with difficulty from Ethel, Fritz prevailed upon her to remain quiet in her seat while he walked the length of the corridor. Half-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

way down he came to the body of the old gentleman lying across the floor; he was perfectly still, and Fritz's hand placed over his heart discovered no beating; he had evidently been killed.

He hastily returned to Ethel, and then both noticed a red gleam of light proceeding from the back of the train in the direction of the collision. In a very few moments light whiffs of smoke and a few sparks were borne down the Tube towards them by the strong draught which was intended to supply air to the trains. This smoke rapidly increased in density and there came a bright glare, with a cracking of burning wood, and heartrending screams. There could not be a doubt but that the train was on fire!

He tried to keep the fact from Ethel as long as he could, but this was not long possible, as in a few minutes the fire had increased rapidly, fanned by the strong current of air.

"Oh! my God," she cried, when she realised it.  
"What shall we do? We shall be burnt alive!"

Fritz essayed to calm her, all the while trying to think of some means of escaping.

"Surely," he thought, "some aid will be sent to us!"

But none came.

Getting desperate, he went to the entrance of the corridor at the further end where a man usually stood to open the light iron doors. The man had

## THE COLLISION IN THE TUBE

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disappeared, possibly he had been injured, even killed.

Fritz got the doors open, and put out his hand to feel in the darkness. The carriage seemed to fit the Tube so well that there was scarcely room for a slight man to pass between it and the wall. Nevertheless he determined to work his way along the train and try and discover a way out. In his pocket he had a box of wax vestas, not quite full; returning to Ethel he explained what he was going to do, and left her a few matches to use in following him along the tunnel if he should call to her. Then he slipped out of the carriage and worked his way along the train towards the motor or engine, striking a light here and there as he proceeded. After some difficulty he reached the motor, past carriages from which groans and even shrieks proceeded. He had to take the greatest care to prevent his hands and face being cut by the broken glass.

Reaching the motor at last he found near it a little group of four men.

"Yes," remarked one as he joined them, "unless help arrives pretty soon we shall be roasted alive. The motor has simply blocked the Tube."

Horrified at the man's words he struck a light and looked around. The heavy motor had been derailed by the collision and lay sideways in the tunnel; there did not appear sufficient room left between it and the

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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wall of the Tube through which a cat could crawl.  
The driver lay dead near it.

Fritz could now see that the fire was gaining ground so rapidly that he determined to return and fetch Ethel. He found her in a terrible state of fear, trying to follow him along the train; the fire had almost reached the corridor in which they had travelled. Putting his arm around her, he succeeded in half guiding her, half pushing her before him towards the front part of the train away from the fire. As they reached the motor again an idea struck him. He had noticed when they had been waiting for their train, that the roof of the carriage in which the motor worked, was of wood. This was firmly wedged against the upper part of the Tube, completely blocking it. It now occurred to him that if this wood, heavy though it was, could be broken away they could get through. At any rate it was better to try than to be burnt alive in the Tube. He climbed into the overturned motor and searched for the tool chest. This he found after some groping, and selected from it a heavy hammer, and what appeared to be a cold chisel; with these two tools he commenced to attack the wooden roof.

At first his progress was almost nil; the wood was hard and thick and he could scarcely make any impression on it, but he encouraged himself by remembering that life and freedom from horrible torture lay the other side of those thick boards. Then

## THE COLLISION IN THE TUBE

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he went to work with a will, and to his great joy knocked out a piece of the roof about a foot square. Encouraged by this he persevered and called to one of the men standing by to find a tool and help him, but without result; the man was too dazed.

There was little time to spare, the fire was creeping steadily along the train, amid the piercing cries of the imprisoned sufferers, and the hot air full of sparks was becoming almost unbearable. Ethel clung to Fritz as he worked, in a half-fainting state; those few passengers who had succeeded in escaping from the corridors and getting to the front of the train were almost mad with terror at the approach of the flames. Fritz worked steadily on and knocked out another piece of wood; could he only detach another such piece, he thought he could work his way through and pull Ethel after him. His steady blows on the heavy panelling of the roof resounded through the tube above the shrieks of the unfortunate passengers, and the crackle of the flames; at last he knocked out another large piece of the woodwork, and with a sigh of thankfulness turned to his half-unconscious companion to break the glad news to her that they were safe. At that moment a great burly fellow, no doubt attracted by the sound of the hammering, climbed into the cab of the motor in which Fritz was working and surveyed the hole in the roof.

"Oh! that's your game, is it?" he remarked,

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"just get out of the way and let me through first."

"Ladies first," responded Fritz, pointing to Ethel, "you must wait."

"Ladies be d—" replied the rough fellow half mad with fright. "I'm going to get through."

Now there were several reasons why this man should not be allowed through the aperture first; and the principal of these was, that owing to his great bulk it was possible that he might get jammed in the hole and thus prevent others passing through it. At any rate he was endangering Ethel's life. These reasons crowded upon Fritz as he stood looking at him; he did not hesitate a moment as to the course he should take. As the great savage put his hand on his shoulder with the intention of thrusting him aside, he raised the heavy hammer he held in his hand and dealt him a blow with it full upon the forehead; the man doubled up and fell like a stricken ox. Then fulfilling his original intention Fritz prepared to get through the opening, and to pull Ethel after him; his very first attempt proved to him that the aperture was still too small to let him pass through. For one moment he hesitated, and then made up his mind in a flash.

There might not be time to enlarge the hole; the flames were approaching rapidly and the smoke was becoming almost suffocating; he therefore decided to secure Ethel's safety at any rate, the opening was quite large enough for her to pass through.

## THE COLLISION IN THE TUBE

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Quickly explaining the situation to her, and bidding her wrap her clothes tightly round her legs, he lifted her and with ease passed her through the hole; then holding her hands he gradually lowered her until she felt confidence to drop to the ground. "Thank God!" he cried as he heard Ethel's voice telling him she was safe, "she will not suffer now."

Then he turned with feverish energy, the energy almost of despair, to widen the opening that he too might escape. Meanwhile Ethel had run forward in the tube, but becoming frightened at the absolutely inky darkness, returned and stood looking up at Fritz working at the roof of the motor carriage.

"Oh, Fritz," she cried, as he paused a moment in his blows. "I'm so frightened, *do* make haste and come out to me, to show me the way out of this dreadful tunnel."

He said a few words to reassure her, and turned to his work again; he thought, however, he would have worked with a greater will, had she shown any solicitude for his own safety.

At last, when well-nigh choked with the smoke, he knocked out another piece of wood, and life and freedom were before him. At that moment, the giant whom he had knocked down regained consciousness and sat up, looking pitifully in his face, blood streaming from his head.

"Here, you get up and crawl through this hole first," he said to the man; "you deserve it for the

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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knock I gave you. Only look sharp, there is very little time."

With great difficulty he got the man up, and almost by force pushed him through the opening. Then he jumped out on to the footboard of the train and cried to the few poor creatures who were huddled together there, awaiting a horrible death, that a way of salvation was open to them. Without losing another moment, he scrambled back into the motor carriage and out through the hole in the roof; in a very short time he stood by Ethel on the line. To his great joy he saw a stream of the unfortunate passengers following through the hole. "Now, what are we to do?" asked Ethel, clasping his arm with both her hands, "how are we to get out of this tunnel?"

Faint with exhaustion and reaction, Fritz could not answer her, but the response to her question came in a visible form. Far away down the tunnel appeared a red light, rapidly growing bigger and bigger, a relief train was approaching. The strong draught had carried the smoke to the next station and given the alarm.

## CHAPTER IX

### FRISNER'S COUP

FROM the time when Ethel Boulger returned to Queen's Gate, her dress in rags, and herself permeated with the smoke of the burning train, a week elapsed before she was sufficiently well to leave the house. Then, her first walk abroad was to the Round Pond, to which place a note — full, be it said, of warm thanks for his heroic rescue of her — had bidden Fritz to meet her.

The latter had no reason to complain of the way she received him; certainly if he had been an accepted lover, he could not have had a more affectionate greeting.

" You are a hero," she repeated time after time; " every one says so. Look at what the papers say! And you are to have a medal too."

Fritz smiled a quiet smile. " *Every one* is wrong," he replied, " and the papers are simply making use of me for copy. As regards the medal, it will be a waste of a good bit of silver. Any other man would have done what I did, had he happened to think of it, and had the life of one he *loved* been in danger."

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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She smiled that quiet, gratified smile as he spoke, and began to dig her umbrella in the ground again, but she did not tell him she loved him in return.

Every day for nearly a week they met thus by the Round Pond, sometimes walking backwards and forwards by its margin, and sometimes making the whole circuit of it as the air grew colder.

It was towards the end of October that the event occurred which turned aside forever the hitherto placid course of their lives. One grey morning when the sun had not appeared to dry up the heavy dampness, and when the grass was too wet to walk upon, Ethel and Fritz took their walk on that broad, gravel path by the edge of the Round Pond.

Perhaps she was a little more tender to him that morning, a little more solicitous of his feelings than was her wont. He walked with his head bent down to hers, and from the pleased smile upon her face, what he said was not distasteful to her. They formed quite a pretty sight, the typical pair of young lovers.

So apparently thought a thin, studious looking gentleman, who, though absorbed in reading a book as he walked to and fro, yet ever kept a sympathetic eye upon them over the top.

Presently, when the clock of the Palace chimed half-past one, and they turned towards the Queen's Gate entrance, the studious gentleman followed

## FRISNER'S COUP

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them, and taking out his handkerchief used it very ostentatiously.

It was strange that immediately upon this, two four-wheeled cabs should move on from the side of the road where they had been standing and halt in front of the very gate Ethel and Fritz were making for. Fritz noticed the two "growlers" and wondered who could want two four-wheeled cabs at once.

He and Ethel were, perhaps, twenty yards from the gate in that secluded path, running parallel with the road, scarcely a soul being about in it except a few loiterers, when the studious gentleman who had been following, overtook them. Removing his hat, he addressed Fritz.

"Mr. Hoffmann, I think," he suggested, in a very mild and insinuating voice.

Fritz turned to him at once, thinking he was one of those professional mendicants who sometimes address frequenters of the Gardens. His handsome gold watch chain and prosperous, though very quiet appearance, however, caused him to alter his opinion.

"What do you want?" he asked rather sharply.

The studious-looking gentleman replied by asking another question.

"May I ask if this lady is Miss Ethel Boulger?" he said.

Fritz looked him full in the face, his eyes sparkling with annoyance.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"What on earth has that to do with you?" he asked.

One or two men who had been loitering aimlessly about that part of the Gardens, seemed now to all take an interest in the Queen's Gate entrance. Two men also, whom they had passed sitting on separate seats, rose and placed themselves a few yards behind them. Fritz noticed them, and turned angrily again to the man who had addressed him.

"What does this mean?" he cried.

The man made a slight gesture of entreaty to them.

"Now I do beg of you both to be calm," he began, "especially you, Miss Boulger," he continued, turning to Ethel, who had seized Fritz's arm, and looked like fainting.

"I have a very unpleasant duty to perform," continued the stranger; "but nevertheless it is a duty and must be done. No doubt the matter will soon be put right if you are sensible."

"Fritz Hoffmann and Ethel Susan Boulger, I arrest you both on a charge of murder."

"Murder!" repeated Fritz, horrified.

The words had no sooner left his lips than he stepped back, and raised the stick he was carrying; at the same time the loitering men closed round him.

"Now don't be a fool, Mr. Hoffmann," continued the stranger. "I am Inspector Frisner, of Scotland Yard, and these men with me are all plain-clothes

## FRISNER'S COUP

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police-officers. You will do no good by resisting ; it is perfectly useless, and you will only alarm the lady."

Fritz lowered his stick, and realised the truth of the detective's statement.

" By what right," he asked, " do you arrest us ? "

" By this right," answered Frisner, taking a warrant from his pocket and holding it before his eyes. " The best of all rights."

Ethel, her face perfectly livid, came close to Fritz, and whispered :

" It is no use, we had better go with these men, and then perhaps we shall be allowed to explain. We cannot stay here, a crowd will collect in a few minutes."

Already some people were strolling towards them from different parts of the gardens to see what was the matter.

" Yes, I think you are right," answered Fritz, after a moment's pause. " We will go with them."

" That's more sensible," remarked Inspector Frisner, who had overheard the remark. " Kindly oblige me by walking with me to those cabs yonder ;" he indicated the two four wheelers which were standing outside the gate, a plain-clothes officer at each door ready to open them.

" If you will get in this first cab, Mr. Hoffmann," said the Inspector when they had reached the ve-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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hicles, "I will follow with Miss Boulger in the other."

"Cannot we go together?" asked Fritz.

"I regret that you cannot," was the polite reply of the detective.

Just as Fritz, with a bow to Ethel, was about to enter the first cab, she took a step towards him and whispered:

"Don't forget your promise to me."

He bowed and raised his hat, then entered the cab, into which he was quickly followed by two of the attendant police-officers. The polite Frisner ushered Ethel into the other cab, and then gingerly entered it himself. One of his satellites at once mounted the box, and the two vehicles drove off to Kensington Police Station.

There in a few minutes the inspector on duty beheld the incongruous sight of a fashionably dressed lady, and her companion, a man of distinguished appearance, both charged with the murder of Sir John Boulger, the lady's father.

## CHAPTER X

### PRISONERS

WITHIN half an hour Horace Boulger arrived white and breathless at the Kensington Police Station, in reply to a frantically worded note from his sister Ethel.

Seated by favour in the Inspector's room, Ethel Boulger, almost beside herself with grief at her situation, poured her woes into her brother's ear, their conversation being punctuated with the wild ravings of a drunken prisoner in the adjacent cells.

"What on earth can be the meaning of it?" gasped poor Horace, white as a sheet, "surely Ethel —"

"They will tell me *nothing*," she cried hysterically. "The Inspector here says that I must wait until we are brought up before the magistrate."

"*We!*" repeated her brother. "Who are we?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you, Horace?" cried the girl, wringing her hands, "that means another confession. I met Fritz Hoffmann in the gardens this morning, and we were brought here together."

"Fritz Hoffmann, the chauffeur!" exclaimed her brother.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"Yes, he's a gentleman you know, who has to get his living. I have met him once or twice before."

"Then his saving your life on the Tube railway was not the accidental affair you represented it to be?"

"No, I had been to the Tower with him."

Poor Horace passed his hand over his white face.

"This is beyond me altogether," he said painfully. "I can't understand it."

"Cannot you get me away from here, Horace?" she cried excitedly. "Surely you can get bail or something of that sort. You are a lawyer? You must."

She seized both his hands, and clung to them frantically.

"Bail!" repeated her brother bitterly, "you cannot have bail. You are charged with murder."

"Oh! my God!" cried Ethel, throwing up her arms, "charged with the murder of my father!"

She gave a loud shriek and went off into a fit of hysterics, which brought the Inspector quickly into the room. The drunken man in the cells hearing her cries redoubled his own, mingled with many vile oaths and curses directed against the police-force in general.

"I think we had better get this pris—, young lady, away to Holloway under the charge of a female warder as soon as possible," he said, with a look of

## PRISONERS

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commiseration at Horace's ghastly face. "It must be a terrible trial to you, sir."

Seated in his cell alone, Fritz Hoffmann turned all the circumstances of the case over in his mind, and thought them well out. Startling as the arrest had been, it did not now appear on cool reflection so surprising, considering the trend of his own thoughts during the last few days.

He calmly went over the whole of the circumstances from the interview with Sir John Boulger on the morning of his death, when he stood before him in the library accused of meeting his young mistress in a secluded part of Kensington Gardens.

Sir John Boulger had not minced matters with him; he had told both him and his daughter plainly that he intended altering his will and leaving his daughter Ethel entirely in the hands of her brother and sister as a preventative of her being influenced—as he put it in his homely language — by a d—d adventurer. That had concluded the incident, and he had left Sir John's presence in a white heat of rage, matched only by that of the worthy knight and his daughter, who, Fritz imagined, must have had a warm time after he left them, as neither father nor daughter were distinguished for their sweet tempers.

Then he had seen his old master once more in that fatal back drawing-room, just before he settled down to his sleep of death. The old man had given him his orders in an abrupt hard tone of voice, but

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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had not referred in any way to the incident of the morning. He called out some additional instructions as Fritz went down the stairs.

Then when he reached the basement he had recollect ed that he had left his cap on the chair outside the back drawing-room and he had quietly returned to get it. It was then as he passed the door of the front drawing-room, he had seen Ethel, her face drawn and ghastly, gazing between the long velvet curtains at her sleeping father.

What was she doing there?

He did not for a moment suppose that any charge would stand against himself; he put his arrest down to a mistake originating in his being frequently seen lately in Ethel's society. And yet sitting there in his cell alone, he felt that his love for her was so great, that if he could clear her from this awful charge and set her free, he would willingly give his life for her, if that would accomplish it.

He sat there dreaming and brooding over all these things, until the little daylight creeping in at the small highly placed window of the cell faded away altogether, and night came down and folded the dreary police station and its wretched inmates in a cloak of darkness.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE EXAMINATION

MR. REDMOND, the neat, clean-shaven solicitor for the Treasury, removed his gold pince-nez with a click, and laying down the papers from which he had been refreshing his memory, commenced to address the Magistrate then sitting at the West London Police Court.

He referred to the fact of the two prisoners, Fritz Hoffmann and Ethel Susan Boulger, having been brought before his Worship in a purely formal manner on a previous occasion, and the serious charge against them having been adjourned for a week, he was happy to inform his Worship that he was now prepared to proceed with the case.

He remarked that it was a case of a most unusual nature, the most extraordinary perhaps which had ever been opened in that Court.

The male prisoner, Fritz Hoffmann, presumably a person of German nationality, a chauffeur, was charged with the murder of his master, Sir John Boulger, who was found stabbed to death in the drawing-room of his mansion in Queen's Gate, last July.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

Sir John Boulger, as was well known, was the proprietor of some large Stores in Oxford Street.

With regard to the female prisoner, the charge against her was of a most painful nature: she was accused of being an accessory to the murder of her father. That was the bare outline of the charge against her; the course of the inquiry would reveal what part she played in the matter more fully.

"With regard to the male prisoner," continued Mr. Redmond, "there are certain somewhat unusual circumstances connected with him. The police, although well acquainted with his movements since he has lived in England, have been utterly unable to trace him in Germany or any other country. Neither will he himself give the smallest information on the subject.

"It is known that he has been getting his living in London for the past three years as a fully qualified chauffeur, that there has been no charge recorded against him during that period, and as far as the police can ascertain he has been living a perfectly reputable life.

"It appears that he is a married man." The lawyer stopped and looked at his notes, while Ethel Boulger, sitting in a chair in the dock, quickly turned her pale careworn face towards Fritz Hoffmann, standing as motionless as a statue by her side. There was astonishment and deep pain in that glance — if the mental agony she had endured since

## THE EXAMINATION

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her arrest left room to record one more throe of anguish.

Fritz gave her back no glance in return, but stood with folded arms looking straight before him, white and motionless.

"It seems," continued the lawyer, "that the prisoner Hoffmann married at Ostend some three years and a half ago a circus rider named Rose Bellamy, as she was known professionally, but whose real name was Rose Jones. The woman apparently gave way to drink very soon after, and the marriage, as it will be shown, was a most unhappy one.

"Still the prisoner seems to have acted a manly part in the matter; he came to England and supported his wife and himself by his earnings as a chauffeur.

"Mrs. Hoffmann, the prisoner's wife, professes to know nothing of his antecedents, except that he is a "gentleman," and the certificate of the marriage — a civil one — reveals very little; the police consider that the information furnished to the authorities at Ostend by Hoffmann was entirely misleading.

"Fritz Hoffmann entered the service of Sir John Boulger about a year ago, and appears to have given satisfaction till last July, when it will be shown that something occurred which very justly caused the late Sir John grave annoyance. It came to his knowledge that his chauffeur, Hoffmann, had been

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

seen walking in a secluded part of Kensington Gardens with his daughter Ethel.

“ Evidence will be produced which will prove that on the morning of his death Sir John Boulger sent for both his daughter and Hoffmann, the chauffeur, and that in his library at his house in Queen's Gate, a very stormy interview took place between all three.

“ Hoffmann was seen to leave the room very white and agitated and evidently under the influence of great anger. A few minutes after Miss Ethel Boulger, the female prisoner, also left the room much agitated, and a servant standing in the hall overheard Sir John make the following threat to his daughter:

“ I shall alter my will and leave you a mere pittance.”

“ To which Miss Ethel Boulger replied, ‘ You will be sorry you said that.’ ”

Through the closely packed court ran a tremor of excitement at this announcement.

“ The murder,” continued Mr. Redmond, “ had until quite recently entirely baffled the police; it was not until within the last few weeks that the authorities at Scotland Yard had been in possession of the information which had resulted in warrants being issued for the arrest of the prisoners now before the Court. The evidence which would be given later

## THE EXAMINATION

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by Inspector Frisner would show that they had good reason for so acting."

Mr. Redmond then proceeded to call witnesses, the first of whom was Eliza Stebbings, a housemaid, formerly in the service of Sir John Boulger.

This woman stated on the morning of the day on which Sir John was murdered, she was engaged in relaying some mats in the hall of his house in Queen's Gate. Whilst laying the mat at the door of the Library, she heard voices raised high in altercation within the room. Subsequently the door opened, and the prisoner Fritz Hoffmann, Sir John's chauffeur, came out looking white and angry. A few minutes after the door again opened and Miss Ethel Boulger, the other prisoner, appeared and stood for a moment or two with her hand holding the door. Sir John, her father, was speaking to her at the moment; she distinctly heard the words he used; they were:

"I shall alter my will and leave you a mere pittance."

"And what did the female prisoner reply to that?" asked Mr. Redmond.

"She said, sir," replied the woman, "you will be sorry you said that."

Again a slight murmur ran through the court, and a young lady closely veiled, who occupied a seat in the front row of the gallery, leant eagerly for-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

ward and noted the expression on both prisoners' faces at this announcement.

Mr. Hugh Kingslake, one of the cleverest criminal solicitors of the day, now rose and cross-examined the housemaid, Eliza Stebbings, on behalf of Miss Ethel Boulger.

"When did you first mention this conversation to anyone?" he asked.

"I mentioned it, sir," she replied, after some hesitation, "the same day in the servants' hall, when I went to dinner."

"And to whom did you mention it?"

"I mentioned it to one of the footmen, sir, the young man I was keeping company with."

"The young man you were keeping company with," repeated Mr. Kingslake, meditatively. "And how did the matter get to the knowledge of the police?"

"I don't know, sir; they came to me."

Mr. Kingslake asked her a series of questions intended to suggest that she was mistaken, but he did not succeed in shaking her evidence; she adhered to her statement that the words were used as she had given them.

The next witness was the butler Simmonds, who gave his evidence with much distress, bursting into tears upon entering the box and beholding his young mistress in the dock.

He deposed that he had been in the service of the

## THE EXAMINATION

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late Sir John Boulger upwards of twenty years and was greatly trusted by him. On the morning of the day he was murdered, Sir John, who was much upset, called him into the library, and asked him some questions concerning Hoffmann, the chauffeur. Among other things he asked him whether he had ever heard that Miss Ethel had been in the habit of meeting him in Kensington Gardens. He had not heard of such meetings, and told Sir John so. He afterwards, at the request of Sir John, sent a house-maid for Miss Ethel, and a little later received an order to find Fritz, the chauffeur, and to send him to the library too. He subsequently heard that there had been high words between Sir John and Miss Ethel.

Passing to the events of the afternoon of the same day, the butler deposed to the message being sent, at the request of Sir John, for Fritz Hoffmann, who went up to the back drawing-room to receive verbal orders from Sir John. He saw him return down the staircase.

“Did you see him return and go up the staircase again?” asked Mr. Redmond.

“No, sir; I went straight and had me dinner,” replied the butler.

“You heard no footsteps going up the stairs?”

“No, sir; one of the footmen was reading the newspaper to me, and the door was shut.”

Rose Tanner, a kitchen-maid, was now called, and

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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in answer to Mr. Redmond stated that on the afternoon of the murder she recollects Fritz Hoffmann going upstairs to see Sir John; when he returned to the basement he said he had left his cap upstairs outside the drawing-room door. He went back up the stairs alone, to fetch it; she saw him go.

A severe cross-examination left this witness unshaken; and the main facts of her evidence were corroborated by the next witness, Anatole Vibart the chef, who gave his evidence in broken English, and very reluctantly.

The next witness was Inspector Frisner, of the Criminal Investigation Department. He deposed to making a complete search of the house at Queen's Gate. Concealed in the chimney of the room occupied at the time of the murder by Miss Ethel Boulger, he found a certain object which he produced.

From a small brown paper parcel the detective held up the elaborately chased silver handle of a dagger; attached to it was a piece of crystal, about two inches in length, evidently the remaining portion of a blade of the same substance, which had been broken off. Both this and the handle bore deep dark stains.

The production of this incriminating piece of evidence caused a rustle of excitement in the Court; Fritz Hoffmann, who had turned very white, gripped hard the rail in front of him and took a long look at Ethel, who sat like one in a dream,

## **THE EXAMINATION**

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**gazing at the dagger haft, now being examined by the magistrate.**

**At this point the Court adjourned, both prisoners being remanded in custody.**

## CHAPTER XII

### A CONSULTATION

ON the evening of the day that Ethel Boulger and Fritz Hoffmann were examined before the magistrate, Hugh Featherstone fulfilled a longstanding engagement to take a *tête-à-tête* dinner with Mona Beauclerk at her flat in Prince Albert's Mansions. Mr. Beauclerk was engaged in an important consultation in the North.

Hugh had only returned that morning from a fortnight's stay in Berlin on business, and he and Mona had spent a long afternoon in going over No. 104, Kensington Square, a lease of which house they had succeeded in securing for a reasonable rent. They were now perfecting their plans with the object of sinking a shaft in the garden for the unearthing of the treasure deposited there by Hugh's ancestor.

"I think we have managed splendidly," ejaculated Mona, when the excellent little dinner had been disposed of and they were sitting comfortably over their cigarettes. "I think that was a splendid idea of yours to engage a man to make an alteration

## A CONSULTATION

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in the drains, then find fault with his work and pay him off, while he has got the place all dug up, and introduce the well-sinker, whom you say you have engaged from a village down in Suffolk. We will certainly carry it out just like that."

"I think it ought to throw dust in the eyes of the neighbours," replied Hugh; "at any rate, I expect there will be dirt enough thrown up to satisfy anybody."

Mrs. Beauclerk fell into a fit of reflection.

"There is one thing, Hugh," she said presently, "which I don't quite understand, and that is, what is to be done with the earth which the well-sinker will throw up?"

"I think I have provided for that," answered Hugh. "I should suggest having a corrugated iron shed put up into which the excavated earth can be shot, then periodically the stuff can be removed in barrows out of the back gate. You will remember that there is a back door to the garden, communicating with a little used lane; the barrows can be run along that to a cart out in the road."

"Excellent!" replied Mona. "You are a regular Napoleon, or Kitchener, or something of that sort. But we mustn't let the workmen talk, especially in the evenings, when perhaps they will go to public houses."

"I have thought of that, too," rejoined Hugh. "I shall provide them with lodgings at the East

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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End of London, and they will have to travel backwards and forwards every morning and evening."

The very correct butler now entered and laid the latest edition of the *Globe*, according to custom, before his mistress. She took it up and casually scanned its contents.

Suddenly those grey-blue eyes of hers hardened, and a deep frown came on her white brow; she dashed the paper down on the floor beside her.

"What's the matter?" asked Hugh, called back to everyday life from dreaming, as he watched the smoke rings of his cigarette curling away. He looked towards Mona, and was startled at the change which had come over her; her face was white and drawn, her eyes had an unnatural glare in them, and her snowy bosom heaved like a broad swell of a troubled sea.

"The matter is," she answered quickly, "that the world seems full of fools!" Then she recollected herself.

"Oh! I forgot," she continued, "that you have been away from England for the last fortnight, and possibly have not heard the recent scandal."

"What scandal?"

Mona in a leisurely way filled a liqueur glass with *fine champagne* from a little decanter standing on a tray before her. Then after a glance at Hugh Featherstone filled a second one and handed it to him.

## A CONSULTATION

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" You had better fortify yourself by drinking this," she said; " the news may upset you. I forgot that the people are friends of yours."

She lifted her own elegant-looking liqueur glass and drank off half its contents; it was by no means the first time that Hugh had seen her do the same thing. In fact she took no pains to conceal her fondness for *fine champagne*.

Hugh took his glass and drank it as she had bidden him.

" Now for the news," he said.

Mona looked away from him for a moment or two as if bracing herself; she was very white when she turned to him again, and there were great dark marks beneath her eyes; the jewels on her fair white hand shook and glittered as she pressed her little lace handkerchief to her lips. " Two persons have been arrested," she began, " for the murder of Sir John Boulger — if it was a murder — the chauffeur, Fritz Hoffmann, and —"

" Why the man is in my service!" exclaimed Hugh, " he is my chauffeur."

Mona just nodded her head, and proceeded:

" — and Ethel Boulger, the daughter —"

Hugh Featherstone rose and brought his hand down with a crash upon the dinner table.

" Ethel Boulger! No!" he cried.

For answer Mona stopped, and picking up the

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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*Globe* which she had thrown on the floor, pointed to a column headed —

“The Queen’s Gate Murder.  
Proceedings before the Magistrate.”

Hugh almost snatched the paper from her hand, and proceeded to read it by the light of one of the electric lamps on the table. His white face showed many variations of emotion as he did so. At last he finished the account and pushed the paper from him.

“I don’t believe a word of it!” he cried.

Mona shrugged her shoulders slightly and made no answer.

“Surely *you* don’t believe it, Mona, do you?” he asked anxiously. “She is incapable of such an act.”

Mona glanced up at his words, and took a long look at him.

“You seem quite a champion of poor Miss Boulger,” she said; “and I fear that just now she requires all the championing she can get.”

There was a ring of bitterness in her tone which did not pass unnoticed by Hugh.

“The whole thing utterly astounds me,” he said after a pause. “I cannot understand it.”

“Oh! I can,” rejoined Mona cynically; “it is these stupid detectives, they have got hold of a mare’s nest, the fools!” She went to the looking-

## A CONSULTATION

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glass over the fireplace, and seemed to be rearranging a refractory curl. As her white jewelled hand glanced to and fro among her superb hair, Featherstone could not but notice the tremor it showed. Amid the background of the darkened room, too, a glimpse of her face, as he caught the reflection of it in the glass, looked ghastly by contrast. The one glance he had of it changed for the moment the current of his thoughts.

"I am afraid you are not well, Mona, are you?" he asked.

"Never better," she replied quickly, her hands among her hair. "Whatever made you think I was ill?"

"I thought you looked rather pale," he answered, "and your hands tremble, too."

The white gliding hands seemed to halt as he spoke, and clench as if to steady themselves; then she turned towards him with a light laugh, a vision of parted red lips and pearl-white teeth.

"What nonsense, Hugh!" she cried, her *riant* face quite natural and bright again. "You must be dreaming! Or more probably the news of Ethel Boulger has upset you. You must have another *fine champagne*." She poured him out another little glass and handed it to him.

Having drunk it, he started up from his seat in a state of great agitation.

"I must go and see Horace Boulger," he cried.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"I must go at once. Until I have seen him and planned out some scheme to save Ethel, I cannot sleep a wink. My God! Only to think of it! She may be convicted."

Mona, finding it useless to detain him, bade him "Good-night" and let him go.

He rushed like a madman round to Queen's Gate and found Horace Boulger still sitting up; a white grief-stricken figure looking ten years older.

Far into the night did the two old schoolfellows sit, trying to work out some fresh evidence which would prove the innocence and secure the release of Ethel. Neither of them for a moment believed her guilty of the murder; both, not knowing the full facts, united in anathematising the name of Fritz, agreeing that he, most probably, was the author of the tragedy.

"I had my suspicions of the villain," exclaimed Horace, "from the very first. But who could possibly imagine that my sister could so far forget herself as to associate with a man little better than a German workman?"

"There is one step we are mutually agreed upon, I am thankful to say," said Hugh, as he rose to go, "and that is, that we will obtain an interview with Ethel, and try to glean the truth from what she can tell us herself."

## CHAPTER XIII

### A PRIVILEGED VISITOR

IN one of those small rooms in Brixton Prison formed by glass partitions, in which prisoners are permitted to see their solicitors, a lady, wearing a thick veil, sat impatiently beating her little foot upon the floor, disclosing in the so doing a glimpse of a purple silk stocking. She was in the position of being a very favoured individual; she had been permitted by a special order to see a prisoner alone, in one of those rooms usually exclusively set aside for legal interviews.

When her patience was well-nigh exhausted with waiting, a man in a blue uniform with a bunch of keys secured to his belt by a long steel chain opened the door and admitted Fritz Hoffmann; closing the door again he left the two to themselves.

The first greetings over, they commenced an animated discourse in German, speaking very earnestly.

“ But this is absurd, Fritz! ” said the lady at length; she had raised her thick veil and disclosed a young, pretty and very piquant face, the greatest charm of which was its sympathetic and ever-changing expression.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"You *cannot*, Fritz," she continued; "it would be simply self-murder."

"Nevertheless, Marguerite," he answered, "I intend to persevere in my determination."

Once more her little foot began to drum upon the floor.

"I shall go straight to your father!" she ejaculated at last. "It is my duty."

"I absolutely forbid it," cried Fritz. "I forbid you to go near him. And if you did, much he would care!"

"I shall go to your brother, then."

Fritz laughed; somewhat bitterly.

"He would care, I imagine," he answered, "still less."

The young lady took a long look at Fritz's face as he sat beside her. In the full light of the window it appeared pale and thin, there were dark marks under the eyes, too, which looked sunken in their sockets.

"This prison will kill you, Fritz," she said presently, in a tone of compassion.

"What does it matter?" he answered carelessly. "You know full well that my life has not been worth much to me for three or four years past now."

Her steadfast grey eyes looked at him wistfully, with deep affection in them; her sweet red mouth trembled in sympathy for his miserable condition.

## A PRIVILEGED VISITOR

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" You must have the best counsel that can be got," she said at last, "*that* I insist upon."

He shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

" What's the *good*?" he answered hopelessly.

She put her two little hands on his shoulder, and shook him slightly.

" I won't have you despair," she cried. " Think of what you are. Think of what you yet may be!"

He turned and smiled at her sadly.

" You are very good, little Marguerite," he said slowly, " but it is no use. I was born for bad luck."

" I don't believe it for a moment," she cried decisively. " You have had great troubles, more perhaps than any other man at your age, but they will pass like clouds, and the sun will shine again."

He placed his hand on hers, and pressed it, and she let it rest there; but for other answer he gave her not a word, his heart was too full.

Thus they sat for some minutes, and then she broke the silence again.

" You are throwing your life away for nothing," she urged.

" I do not look at it in that way at all," he replied. " I prefer to say that I am giving something which is of very little value to me, to save the life of one for whom I have a very great regard."

The piquant features of the young lady gathered into a look of sternness; she drew her hand away from Fritz.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"I suppose the truth is," she observed rather frigidly, "that you have fallen in love with this girl, Ethel Boulger?"

For a moment his pale face became suffused with a bright flush, which quickly faded away again. He looked down and answered:

"I have a great regard for her; the word 'love' would be misplaced under the circumstances existing between us."

She did not press the subject further, but changed it for another.

"How do you know that by adopting the course you suggest you *will* save her?" she asked.

"In the first place," he replied, after some consideration, "I know full well that once I try to clear myself I must of necessity render her position much worse. On the other hand, if I keep silence and do nothing, I shall draw attention to myself, and the authorities will take it for granted that I am guilty."

"And you really want to go out of this world a disgraced man?" she asked frantically; "a man convicted of a brutal murder. *You* who—"

He held up his hand and stopped her.

"It really does not matter, Marguerite," he answered. "Who knows Fritz Hoffmann, the chauffeur, and who will care?"

"*I* shall care," she answered. "*I* shall care with all my soul."

## A PRIVILEGED VISITOR

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She gazed at him with the tears welling from her eyes, her lips trembling.

He gave one look at her, then sunk his head between his hands and groaned.

"Don't make it harder for me, Marguerite," he pleaded. "Don't make it hard for me to do the only act of self-sacrifice in my life."

She grasped his hand again, and held it in hers.

"Tell me," she asked, "how you will incriminate Ethel Boulger if you tell the truth?"

"I cannot," he answered.

"Tell me, then, whether you think her guilty," she urged.

"I cannot say whether she is innocent or guilty," he replied. "I do not know — for certain."

"But you know something?"

He paused before he answered her. "Yes, I know *something*," he replied at last, dejectedly, with a sigh.

She released his hand, as the warder made his appearance at the door.

"I'm sorry to say time's up, miss," announced the man with a glance of respectful admiration at her pretty face as he closed the door again.

"I must go, Fritz," she said, quickly drawing down her veil. "I am sorry that man saw my face."

"Why do you run the risk of coming here, Marguerite?" Fritz asked, taking her hand in his.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"I think you must have the nature of an angel."

"I come," she said, smiling through her veil, "because I am fond of *somebody*, and because we were children together."

He raised her left hand held in his to his lips and kissed it.

"But what would the world say, dear," he urged, "if it knew a certain young lady came to visit a common chauffeur in a prison, charged with murder, and that that young lady was a Princess of the Royal House of —?"

She put up her right hand, white and soft, and closed his lip with it, and he, taking it in his own, kissed it as he had done the other.

"The world," she answered, "can say just whatever it likes."

## CHAPTER XIV

### AN INTERVIEW AT ST. JAMES'S PALACE

PERHAPS it was the fog clinging like a wet garment to the bare trees in the Palace Garden which damped the Princess' spirits, and caused her to walk backwards and forwards in her cozy little boudoir in St. James's Palace, part of an elegant suite set aside for the use of herself and her grandmother at a period far back in the reign of the good old Queen when the Princess was a little child.

Ever since the death of her father, the Duc de Valois, when she had been left alone in the world, she had found her home in the old world Palace; her grandmother and the good Queen had been friends since girlhood, and when she, a little orphan Princess of the Blood Royal of Atavia, had been brought to her grandmother, the kind-hearted Queen had insisted upon constituting herself a kind of Fairy Godmother to her, one who should with her own Grand-dame watch over her young entry into the great world.

Want of means had certainly not been the reason of the Good Queen's solicitude; the little Princess

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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was richly dowered with the combined fortunes of her father and the sweet young mother who had died in giving her birth; both her parents had been members of Royal Families whose great riches were proverbial. No, it was the kind desire to provide the little Princess with a mother's care which moved the Greatest Lady in the Land to have this child about her that her young life might grow to womanhood in the surroundings of a Pure Court.

And little Marguerite of Valois herself grew up, as the good Queen wished, pure and clean of heart.

On this particular November afternoon, a feverish restlessness consumed the Princess Marguerite; she walked to and fro in her boudoir, with ever an anxious eye on the little buhl clock on her writing table. It was nearly half-past three; and as its little gong softly chimed the half-hour, a gorgeous powdered footman presented himself, and bowed very low.

"Inspector Frisner," said the man, "states that he has an appointment with your Royal Highness at half-past three. Will it please your Royal Highness to receive him?"

"Yes, let him come here," was the Princess' brief answer.

The man bowed and disappeared; in a few minutes he returned, and held open the door for the well-known detective to pass in.

The Princess was standing by the fire as he en-

## INTERVIEW AT ST. JAMES'S PALACE

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tered and acknowledged his low bow, after the manner of Royal Princesses so to do, with a little inclination of the head.

Frisner stood in an attitude of expectation, saying nothing; the Princess, noticing his constraint, motioned him to a chair by the fire, seating herself at the same time on the opposite side.

"Your Royal Highness was pleased to send for me — ?" he began.

"Yes, I have sent for you, Mr. Frisner," she replied, "to ask you a few questions on a certain matter."

The detective inclined his head submissively.

"I want you to tell me something," she continued, "about the Queen's Gate murder."

Frisner sat up in his chair with a renewed attention, and marvelled in his heart what a Royal Princess should want to know about such a matter.

"Yes, your Royal Highness," he responded.

"I want you to tell me whether you have discovered anything concerning the antecedents of the man who is accused of the murder — I mean Fritz Hoffmann."

Inspector Frisner looked rather dubious, and considered before he answered.

"I regret to say," he replied at last, "that we have discovered very little."

"You have not traced him abroad?"

The detective shook his head and answered:

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"No."

"Now I know you won't mind telling me what I am going to ask," suggested the Princess with a particularly sweet smile, "will you?"

The ultra polite detective officer shifted uneasily on his chair, and put a nervous hand to his short black side whiskers.

"I will give your Royal Highness," he proceeded in reply, "all the information which I, as a servant of the Crown, am permitted to do."

The Princess seemed satisfied with his answer and the evident susceptibility he was showing to her influence.

"I want you to tell me," she asked even more sweetly, "whether you have discovered any more evidence which has not yet been made public."

The officer's face at this interrogatory expressed blank distress.

The Princess came to his rescue.

"I think I ought to tell you, perhaps first," she said, "*why* I take an interest in the case."

Frisner bowed, glad of the respite, and contemplated with fresh admiration the pretty, very symmetrical figure of the Princess, clothed in soft grey, in a big chair opposite to him. She seemed plunged in deep consideration, the small red mouth was pursed, her sparkling grey eyes were cast down, and a slight frown — a very slight one — rested on her white forehead, made to look all the whiter by

## INTERVIEW AT ST. JAMES'S PALACE

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the neatly arranged curling hair around it. As the detective gazed, the Princess thrust forth an exceedingly neat foot, disclosing a green silk stocking, and toyed with the tiger's skin before the fireplace with the toe of her patent leather shoe. She was considering how she could best help poor Fritz, and yet not give the detective ground for suspecting a scandal; she decided to transfer her interest for the moment to the female prisoner.

"A woman placed as Miss Ethel Boulger is, *must*," she proceeded, "command every other woman's sympathy until absolutely proved guilty."

Frisner inclined his head.

"Therefore you can understand my position with regard to the case, Mr. Frisner?"

"Your Royal Highness' feelings," he replied admiringly, "do you credit."

"Then you will not mind telling me what you know?" she asked.

"I will tell all I know," he replied, "which is really very little. The papers have no doubt told you a good deal?"

"I have read the papers."

"Well, I think I can go so far as to tell your Royal Highness that your fears for Miss Ethel Boulger may prove to be groundless."

"In what way?" asked Marguerite.

"It is the general opinion," he went on, "at the Yard — Scotland Yard — that the murder was com-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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mitted by the man Fritz Hoffmann, and that Miss Ethel Boulger had nothing to do with it."

The Princess rose from her seat, and walked backwards and forwards with flushed face, showing every sign of agitation.

"Then permit me to say, sir," she replied with flashing eyes, speaking under great excitement, "that as far as Fritz is concerned, Scotland Yard is quite wrong. He is innocent."

The trained detective looked down at his hat, and gently smoothed its silk surface with his finger. He saw in a flash which way the wind was blowing, and it filled him with consternation; the Princess had given the whole situation away with her show of feeling.

The officer saw before him the prospect of having this Royal Princess, with all her influence and vast wealth, ranged against him on the prisoner Hoffmann's side; it was far from a pleasing prospect to a comparatively young and rising member of the Criminal Investigation Department.

He was now, however, quite on his guard, and ready for any move of the Princess; in the brief moments he had for reflection he had come to a conclusion. In his heart he believed Hoffmann to be guilty of the murder; at any cost he would do his duty. Marguerite abruptly terminated her walk, and sat down again in the big chair.

"I do not think it is possible," she added as an

## INTERVIEW AT ST. JAMES'S PALACE

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afterthought, "that any one could come to any other conclusion after reading the evidence as carefully as I have done."

Frisner inclined his head again in his usual submissive manner.

"It would be very easy for him to clear himself if he would only speak," he said. "He will give us no information whatever."

"Perhaps he *cannot*," Marguerite answered.

Frisner seemed at a loss to understand her, and leant towards her in an attitude of inquiry.

"I mean," she repeated, "that perhaps he cannot clear himself without incriminating some one else."

Frisner reflected, then slightly shrugged his shoulders apologetically.

"I do not see how that could be possible, your Royal Highness," he answered.

The Princess looked at him as if she would read his thoughts; the tears almost welled from her eyes as she recollected that this thin, stooping, *ugly* man, with his straggling black moustache and sallow face, probably had the power of compassing Fritz's death. There was a long pause before she spoke again; she turned her face towards the window and looked at the dull prospect.

"In depressing weather like this," she proceeded, "I suppose one's thoughts wander. I think mine have been wandering since we have been buried in this awful fog. I think I dream sometimes. Do

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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you believe in dreams, Mr. Frisner? — day-dreams?"

The detective assumed a position of consideration; dreams were so entirely out of the line of his calling that he was wondering if he could recollect anything bearing upon them.

"No, your Royal Highness," he replied at last, "I don't think I do."

"Then I am afraid," she continued, "that you will not take much interest in what I am going to tell you. I must commence by saying, of course, that I do not believe that either of your two prisoners committed the murder at Queen's Gate. I have sat in this room lately, and perhaps for want of something better to do — perhaps in sympathy for the accused persons — after reading the paper, have wondered who *did* commit the murder. It was in such a fit of speculation yesterday that I had the dream I am going to tell you about."

As an item of agreeable conversation the detective was prepared to listen to an account of the dream. From the point of view of a police officer, he was prepared to reject it, *ad initium*.

"I must add," proceeded the Princess, "that I am a great believer in telepathy; I believe thoughts are transmitted with greater ease than the messages of Signor Marconi, and over greater distances between sympathetic persons. Where my message came from I know not, but just at this time yester-

## INTERVIEW AT ST. JAMES'S PALACE

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day, sitting in this very chair, a telepathic message seemed to come to me as I was thinking of the Queen's Gate murder. I saw a vision of a woman with a broken dagger in her hand, just as it was described in the Court, stained and dripping with blood!"

The Princess paused, and gripped the arms of her chair, leaning forward towards Frisner, with her dark grey eyes wide open with the earnestness of her subject.

"On my word as I live, I saw this woman standing with the blood-stained dagger," she proceeded, "just as if she had wrenched it from the wound, her eyes were staring wide open, and she was deadly pale; but the woman was *not* Ethel Boulger."

"Who was she?" quickly asked the detective, his voice filled with interest.

"She was a stranger to me; a fair woman, beautifully formed and very handsome, with large grey eyes, and hair curling round her face."

The Princess sank back in her chair full of agitation and put a little lace handkerchief to her lips.

Frisner rose from his seat.

"I pray your Royal Highness will dismiss me now," he asked in some anxiety at her distress. "I fear I have caused you pain."

"Oh! no," she answered, quickly rising from her seat, "but there is one thing I want you to promise me, Mr. Frisner."

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"Yes, your Royal Highness."

"I want you to come again if I ask you, and to tell me what you can."

He bowed very low.

"I am always at your service," he answered.

Going down the stairs Frisner turned the conversation over in his mind.

"I don't understand the ways of Courts," he ruminated, "not these sort of Courts at any rate. But what on earth does that beautiful Royal Princess want to trouble herself about a German chauffeur for?"

## CHAPTER XV

### HOLLOWAY PRISON

HOLLOWAY PRISON was not designed by its architect as a pleasure resort: its interior devoted entirely to the female sex is about as dismal as such places usually were a hundred years ago. Being "under remand" Ethel Boulger was privileged to have a kind of room to herself, and to have such meals as the prison authorities approved of, sent to her from without. As a matter of fact, at this time meals were subjects of absolute indifference, if not loathing, to her. Under the awful mental strain her nervous system had almost broken down. She was allowed the favour of a private doctor, and he being a modern man of resourceful ideas, had made the most of her surroundings, and very sensibly ordered her a "rest cure;" poor Ethel Boulger was in bed. To the room in which she lay her brother Horace and Hugh Featherstone were admitted one foggy day early in November, by the special permission of the Governor.

A female warder, sturdy and strong of limb, showed them in; another woman, more of the nurse type, rose and left the room as they entered, but as

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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she did not close the door after her, but left it about a couple of inches open, Hugh Featherstone concluded that she had received orders not to go out of earshot. Poor Ethel, to his eyes, looked a mere wreck of her former self, lying wrapped in a lace-decked dressing jacket, which seemed terribly out of place in the dismal surroundings. What was worse, she appeared to him to be listless and heart-broken.

"It is very good of you both to come," she said, the first greetings over. "I could hardly have expected Hugh."

She gave him a glance in which there was thankfulness, mixed with a certain petulance at her situation.

"I came," began Hugh, "because I was determined to hear from your own lips the story of this dreadful affair. I need hardly tell you that I am a very true believer in your perfect innocence."

She gave him a grateful look, but did not speak, her lip trembled. Hugh turned a hasty glance on Horace Boulger, but quickly turned away again; the look of stony grief on his face, as he contemplated his sister in the prison bed, turned Hugh quite cold. He started on the topic which had brought him there straightway.

"Now tell me, Ethel," he began, "exactly what you were doing on the day your father met his death. Remember now, I am asking for your sake.

## HOLLOWAY PRISON

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And that sake," he added, dropping his voice, and leaning towards her, "is very dear to me."

She gave him another look and a pale, wan smile, and put her hand out towards him; he took it in his own.

Then lying back she seemed to be trying to remember; her blue eyes were fixed upon the ceiling in contemplation.

" You would like to know *all* I did that day, Hugh, wouldn't you? " she asked presently.

" Yes, everything," he answered, and touched poor Horace sitting by him, deep in thought, on the knee, that he might listen too.

" It is quite true," she began, " that I had some words with poor father in the morning." The recollection of it brought the tears welling down her cheeks, but she quickly wiped them away again. " Father had somehow got to know that I had been walking in Kensington Gardens with Fritz Hoffmann."

" Whatever made you do it, Ethel? " broke in her brother.

" I don't know *what* made me do it, Horace," she answered weakly. " I think there must have been some fate in it. Zara and I met him in a tea shop in Bond Street once, that is how it began. Then we went on meeting him after just for the fun of the thing, I suppose."

Hugh Featherstone's face flushed with annoy-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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ance, and he beat his foot impatiently on the uncarpeted floor.

"Then Zara knows all about it, and used to meet him too?" asked Horace.

"Yes," she answered. "I very seldom met him alone; the times that we were seen together in the Gardens were quite exceptions."

Horace's face grew black as he pondered over what she said.

"Don't be hard on Zara," continued Ethel, "she is a very good sister. She comes to me here as often as they will let her."

There was a pause, and then Horace asked her another question.

"How did father get to know you had met the chauffeur in Kensington Gardens? Who told him?"

Her pale face lighted up as she answered.

"Did you ever know that father sometimes met a strange lady in the Gardens himself?"

"No!" replied Horace in astonishment.

She nodded her head several times.

"I knew it," she continued. "I have seen him meet her, and I have seen her walking by herself alone. She generally frequented that part where the tea house is, just on the borders of the park. She was a very beautiful woman. I believe it was she who told father of my meeting with Fritz Hoffmann."

## HOLLOWAY PRISON

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Both Horace and Hugh Featherstone regarded her in the utmost astonishment; the late Sir John Boulger had a reputation for unblemished propriety.

"What reason," asked Hugh, "have you for supposing that she told Sir John of your meeting with Hoffmann?"

"I met her," replied Ethel, "the day before father spoke to me in the Gardens, and Fritz Hoffmann was with me."

Poor Horace wrung his hands.

"How *could* you, Ethel!" he asked plaintively. "How *could* you meet a common chauffeur, a man not much better than your father's coachman, under such circumstances?"

Hugh Featherstone bent his brows in a deep frown as he awaited her answer to her brother's question.

"I think you make a mistake about that," she replied rather sharply, "there is no question whatever that he is a gentleman."

"And if he is," replied Horace warmly, "you had no right to meet him like that. He is a married man!"

A bright flush mounted to Ethel's pale face; she almost sat up in the bed as she answered her brother with flashing eyes.

"I never knew he was married, that I swear!" she cried, holding up her hand. "Do you think I should ever have met him like that if I had known?"

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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Featherstone quickly broke in to avoid any further angry words between the brother and sister.

"We haven't much time left," he said, "and I particularly want you, Ethel, to tell me one thing before I go; and that is this: Where were you on that fatal day when your father was supposed to be sleeping in the back drawing-room."

She considered for some moments before she answered him.

"I did," she said at last, "what you may consider a very extraordinary thing. The day was very hot, and I went right up to the top of the house and out on to the roof to see if I could get a breath of fresh air. Zara, Horace and I often used to go up there to enjoy the view. Didn't we, Horace?"

He nodded his head sadly:

"Yes, Ethel," he answered, "we often did."

"How long did you stay there, Ethel? Remember these points are *most* important?" urged Hugh.

She considered.

"I don't think I stayed there more than ten minutes," she replied presently.

"Then what did you do after that?"

"I came down and feeling very hot went into the bathroom adjoining my bedroom, and had a bath."

"Did anyone see you go into the bathroom?" asked Hugh anxiously.

## HOLLOWAY PRISON

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"No, the servants were all down at their dinners."

Hugh looked very dubious.

"Was there any difficulty about your getting out on the roof?" he asked.

"No," she answered, "the key of the little door leading out on to the leads, was always left in it. I only had to turn it and walk out. The stairs led right up to it."

"Did you close the door when you came down?" Hugh asked.

"No, I think — in fact I am sure — I left it open to air the house. I thought the draught would make it cooler."

Poor Ethel sank back on her pillow and began to look tired and faint: Hugh was quick to notice it.

"I think I am tiring you, Ethel," he said, "we had better go." She put out her feverish hand and caught his again.

"Don't go," she pleaded, bursting into tears. "Stay with me as long as you can. Both of you. It is lonely in this horrible place."

For a few minutes they remained trying to soothe and comfort her; then the woman who had been sitting by her bed when they arrived, returned. It was a gentle reminder that they must go.

Going down the long, cheerless, stone passages Hugh Featherstone put his arm affectionately over

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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Horace's shoulder, as one schoolboy might do to another.

"Cheer up, old chap," he said brightly. "Ethel has told me something to-day, which I think will go a long way towards setting her free."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CHEST AT LAST

THE new tenants of 104, Kensington Square had lost little time in attending to the sanitary requirements of the old house; scarcely a week elapsed after the signing of the lease ere the erection of a boarding around the fore court announced the arrival of the workmen. If anything further were wanted, the display of a large board bearing the words, "Simpkins, Sanitary Engineer," in large letters with an address in High Street, left little doubt as to the nature of the excavations which were being made both in front and at the back of the house.

People passing, shook their heads at the sight; and remarked to friends and acquaintances on the insanitary nature of a dwelling which should require such serious operations to put it in habitable repair.

This state of affairs continued for over a month, during which time a small corrugated iron building had been erected over part of the garden; not an unusual erection by any means, but of a sort which might have been seen in several of the neighbours' gardens in the form of bicycle-sheds, or even an attempt at a small garage.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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" You will see," observed the shrewdest of the neighbours, " that these new people at 104 intend to keep a motor. I hope all will go well, but I doubt it."

After the time mentioned, however, a change came over the scene. Mr. Simpkins' board disappeared from the front of the house; the verdict of the neighbours was unanimous: " Want of money; the poor man has not been paid."

This, however, was far from being the fact; Mr. Simpkins had been ordered to carry out certain drainage works connected with the house, not on contract, but on piece-work. He had simply received an intimation that he would not be required to proceed with the work any farther, had sent in his bill and had received a cheque for it by return of post.

In a few days, however, two men of countrified aspect arrived, and apparently proceeded with the work initiated by the sanitary Mr. Simpkins.

It was then that Mona Beauclerk and Hugh Featherstone visited the house almost daily, and held long consultations with the elder of the two workmen whose conversation was one long " burr." Sometimes they would leave the house smiling, and sometimes with depressed countenances; it depended always on the news the deep-voiced countryman had for them.

One foggy day when the work was still being

## THE CHEST AT LAST

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proceeded with by the aid of the electric light — a wonder to the two countrymen — Mona and Hugh made their appearance early in the afternoon, their faces full of expectation; the well-sinker had promised to have good news for them.

He came lurching out of the iron shed at Hugh's call, letting out a flood of electric light on the foggy air, and scraping his great heavy boots with much care and ceremony on the doorstep entered the little "study" at the back of the house, which had been fitted up with some attempt at comfort and in which a bright fire burned.

"Well, Haggerstone," asked Hugh as he entered, "what news?"

The man stood there scratching his head with a clay-stained hand.

"We be coom' to a dead starp," he announced.

"Come to a dead stop!" repeated Hugh. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, zur, we be coom to the Tube Railway."

Mona and Hugh exchanged dismayed glances.

"Of course," said Mona ruefully, "we never thought of that. The Tube must run under the garden. The agent of course wouldn't tell us, for fear we should not take the house. What are we to do, Hugh?"

Hugh looked blankly at the well-sinker, Haggerstone. "What do you suggest?" he asked.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

The man contemplatively scratched his head again for some moments.

"Will you gi' me a sight o' the plan again, zur?"

This was duly produced from a locked drawer and laid before him; he bent over it for some minutes; then with much pointing of an earth-stained finger, he propounded some plan which seemed to fill them both with hope again.

"In plain words then," said Hugh a few minutes later, "you intend to work round the Tube, and to do that, you will require another man and an air-pump?"

"That be so, zur," the man answered.

"Haggerstone," commented Mona, her lovely face lighting up with anticipation, "I think you are a perfect *genius*. But remember one thing," she added as the man stood grinning, "*not a word to a soul!*"

The yokel touched his forelock.

"Never fear, mum," he answered impressively. "I never speaks to nobody, and my pal, 'e might as well have no tongue, 'e's that close. Besides," he added, "we want's to finger that fifty-pun note, and see some o' the sights o' London."

The poison of the Metropolis had entered deep into both their souls, the frequenting of the glare and blare of a cheap music-hall had become both a habit and a necessity like opium-smoking to a Chi-

## THE CHEST AT LAST

---

nese. Early to bed, and consequent risings at five o'clock were things of the past.

The intervention of the Tube between their operations and the buried treasure of James II necessitated another fortnight's waiting — at the end of that period, the expectation of both Mona and Hugh rose to fever heat.

"I suppose we can trust these men," suggested Mona, as she and Hugh were dining together one night at a restaurant, Mr. Beauclerk being in the throes of an Autumn Session at the House; "sometimes I feel very nervous about them."

"I don't think you need have any fear," answered Hugh. "I think they are both too stupid to be thieves. My version of the matter, namely, that we were unearthing certain family deeds of great value to ourselves, but useless to other people, seemed to be accepted without question by Haggerstone. Besides, what could such men do with thousands of guineas of the time of James II? Directly they attempted to change them the whole affair would come to light. No, I think these honest countrymen are simply delighted at the good luck which has brought them such high wages, and the prospect, as Haggerstone puts it, of 'fingering' the fifty-pound note we have promised them."

"Now one comes to think of it," observed Mona in a more satisfied voice, "what are we going to do with all those golden guineas?"

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"I have a plan for their disposal," replied Hugh, "which I think will be all right; meanwhile, let us get hold of them *first*."

Two days more and Hugh returning home from the theatre late one night, found a surprise awaiting him in the form of a telegram; it was from Haggerstone, the well-sinker, and ran as follows:

"Sanitary Inspector came down on us this afternoon. Wants all workings opened. Am working all night. Come down whenever you receive this without fail."

The prospect now seemed so hopeless that he was for abandoning the whole scheme, when the thought struck him to ring up Mona on the telephone.

Fortunately she had not gone to bed, and in a few almost whispered sentences, he acquainted her with the state of affairs. He could tell by her answers that she was crushed by the news; but presently she took a more hopeful view.

"Hubert is at the House," she said, "come down at once and I will go to Kensington Square."

He lost very little time in wrapping himself in a thick motor coat, and telling his servant to call a hansom; then in a few minutes he was bowling down Knightsbridge in the direction of Kensington Square.

Arrived at No. 104, he let himself in with a latch-

## THE CHEST AT LAST

---

key, and proceeded at once to the corrugated iron shed in the back garden.

Here there was a glare of electric light and two men working at the air-pump, the snake-like india-rubber tube of which wound away down the dark hole, with which Hugh was now quite familiar.

He had not been by the working long when Mona, wrapped in a thick white cloak, stood beside him; they both had keys, she had used hers to let herself in.

“Well?” she asked.

“There is no ‘well’ at present,” he answered. “I have heard nothing from Haggerstone. He is working below.”

Hugh pressed an electric push fixed in the side of the shed, and took a small telephone receiver off its hook. The telephone was fitted to the bottom of the working.

“I have rung him up, Mona,” announced Hugh, “perhaps you would like to speak to him first.”

“No, you go on,” she answered. “You can tell me what he says.”

“Hulloa!” called Featherstone. He held the receiver to his ear for a few moments, and then announced the result.

“He is coming up,” he said, “he wants to have a talk to us.”

They crossed the garden back to the house, and went into the little room which was fitted up as a

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

kind of office; here Haggerstone had caused a fire to be lit, expecting their arrival.

Very soon he came across too from the shed all grimed with earth as he was; in a few brief words he related how the Sanitary Inspector had "dropped" on them late the previous evening — it was then one o'clock in the morning — and how that official had insisted on having all the workings laid open for inspection by ten o'clock that morning.

"I ain't goin' to have no badly laid drains in my district," he had announced to the discomfited well-sinker.

"I should ha' took and hit 'un," commented Haggerstone with some warmth, "if he hadn't cleared off."

"Then," he continued, "when he'd garne I worked like a devil at that hole. I knew if we was to find what you wanted, we'd have to find 'un to-night or not at all, and jest an hour ago, my spade struck 'un."

"You don't mean to say you've come to it for certain!" gasped Mona. "Are you *sure*?"

"I'm as sure, mum," he answered solemnly, "as I'm a-standin' in this heer room that at the bottom o' that theer hole, there's a big oak chest with rusty iron bands round it."

"Bring it to the surface here, before daylight, Haggerstone," announced Hugh without more ado,

## THE CHEST AT LAST

---

"and I put the fifty pound note in your hands at once."

A broad grin broke over Haggerstone's face.

"It be moighty heavy for *deeds* zur," he said.  
"We'd better get a rope round it and haul it up by  
the windlass. I'll fill in the top o' the workings by  
the time the Inspector comes."

Mona and Hugh exchanged a glance at the man's words; he had evidently divined its contents.

Before he went back to the work again Hugh asked him one question.

"How far have you got with the excavation?" he asked, "and where did you strike the chest?"

"I'd driven the cross tunnel right under the Tube Railway," answered Haggerstone. "The chest lay about twelve foot the other side of it; perhaps eighteen foot below it."

Presently when he had gone across to the shed again, to descend once more to the hole, Mona turned to Hugh anxiously.

"Do you think we can trust him?" she asked.  
"Do you think the temptation will be too great for him and he will break into the chest?"

"I think it's Hobson's choice," answered Hugh.  
"We shall *have* to trust him; as far as I am concerned, I believe he will prove honest. If you like I will go down the shaft."

Mona laughed, and gave a look at his clothes.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"You look well equipped for that," she commented. "Just fancy a smart man in evening-dress and pumps, descending into the bowels of the earth at the end of a dirty rope." The idea seemed to amuse her.

"Let us go across if you like," she added, "and be ready when the chest comes to the surface."

When they arrived in the shed once more they found the two men were performing different duties. One was steadily grinding at the air-pump; the other was winding out rope from the windlass; Haggerstone had descended, they were informed, and was hauling on the other end of the rope. When he had made it fast he had arranged to ring up the telephone.

Mona and Hugh, well wrapped in their warm outer clothing, stood in the cold night air, anxiously watching the rope paying out. It seemed to leave the windlass very slowly; presently it fell slack and the man stopped unwinding.

Then ensued a weary wait of some minutes, during which the patience of Mona and Hugh was strained to the utmost. Twice the latter stated his intention of descending into the working, and twice Mona's soft hand restrained him. Then he would have rung Haggerstone up on the telephone incessantly, until she pointed out that he would be only delaying him. Nevertheless the unpleasant fact was vividly impressed on both their minds, that at

## THE CHEST AT LAST

---

that very moment Haggerstone might be helping himself to the contents of the chest and filling his pockets with the same.

It was nearly four o'clock by Hugh's watch when the telephone-bell rang out sharply, and he rushed to it and took the receiver off the hook.

"Haul up slowly," came the words, "they must be careful or it'll get jammed."

Steadily and carefully the man set to work on the windlass. From his exertions it was clear that he was hauling a great weight at the end of the rope. Nearly half-an-hour more passed before Haggerstone's voice came up in muffled tones from the bottom of the shaft.

"Haul up now as soon as you like." He had evidently safely steered the chest along the cross-working.

Mona and Featherstone's excitement now reached such a pitch, that the latter insisted on taking a hand at the windlass. Even then, the two had all they could do to haul the heavy weight on to the surface, but they felt it coming nearer and nearer. Presently what looked like the square end of a coffin came in view at the mouth of the shaft, a coffin which had been buried in the earth for years and years. Its rusty iron-clamped sides were still incrusted with gravel.

The man at the air-pump now left it, and went to the mouth of the shaft to steady the chest. Mona

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

hung over it in breathless anticipation. With a great effort the three men at last got the chest on *terra firma*. Then Hugh left the windlass, and going down on his knees examined it.

It was a very strong oblong oaken box, with great clamps of iron going right round it. He feverishly inspected the locks, of which there were three. It was very evident that the chest had not been tampered with in any way. The great iron clamps were still firmly rusted together, and bore no trace of having been touched; the deep red gravel clung to them still, just as they had been raised out of the soil.

Within half-an-hour Haggerstone, with a fifty pound-note in his pocket, was sitting with his two mates, expectantly on the doorstep of an early public-house in the Kensington Road, while Hugh Featherstone was rumbling along Knightsbridge in a belated four-wheeler towards his home in Dover Street, with a dirty old chest on the roof, probably containing an immense fortune.

"I'll have that hole boarded in and earth atarp o' it, by the time that perishin' Inspector come," had been Haggerstone's last words.

Mr. Beauclerk coming to breakfast fresh and rosy that morning found amongst his letters the following curious anonymous communication, written evidently in a feigned hand:

## THE CHEST AT LAST

---

"I should look after my wife if I were you," it ran; "because she is keeping assignations with a gentleman at 104, Kensington Square, right under your nose. They have taken the house together for the purpose. It is about time you woke up.

"Yours,  
"A WELL-WISHER."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE SACRIFICE OF FRITZ

ETHEL BOULGER and her companion in the dock, Fritz Hoffmann, were brought once more before the magistrate at the West London Police Court, and were then — despite the strong speech of the former's talented lawyer — both duly committed to take their trial for murder at the next session of the Central Criminal Court, which was to take place at the New Bailey — or Old Bailey, as the judges insisted on its still being called — at the beginning of December.

The announcement of the magistrate's decision was a terrible blow to Horace Boulger. His ashen face raised to the dock was the last sight that Fritz saw as he turned away to leave the court, a minute or two after Ethel had preceded him.

The brother's look of intense grief was another reason which cemented his resolution to adhere at all costs to the plan he had fixed upon.

The weak point in Ethel's case of course was, that she could produce no witnesses to prove where she had been while her father was taking that unfortunate sleep in the small drawing-room at Queen's Gate.

## THE SACRIFICE OF FRITZ

---

Fine as her lawyer's eloquence was, it was evident that this was the fact which weighed heaviest in the magistrate's mind in coming to a decision to commit her for trial.

She was removed to Holloway to await the opening of the session, while Fritz was carried to Brixton Prison to await the same event. Here he was visited within a few days by the Princess Marguerite, closely veiled and passing under the name of Miss Le Brun. After the first greetings, and when they were left alone, she raised her veil, disclosing a white, agitated face.

"I was in the police court," she said, "and heard it all. Surely you have altered your determination, now that you have pleaded 'Not Guilty.'"

"I pleaded 'Not Guilty,'" he answered, "because I was assured by Miss Boulger's lawyer, that if I did not I should prejudice her case. He also tried to persuade me to be legally represented, but I declined."

The Princess wrung her white hands; "I do not believe, Fritz," she said presently, "that you can realize what you are doing. You are throwing your life away."

His clear-cut, dark face, pale and wan with the confinement of the prison, showed still no sign of weakness; his determined under jaw was as firmly set as ever.

"That question," he said, replying to her, "has

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

already been settled in my mind, and I do not intend to waver."

She placed her little, white hand on his arm and looked up at him. "I have some news for you, Fritz," she said, "which I think can hardly have reached you here: I went to see your wife last night to pay her the money you asked me to give her. She is very ill, she is not expected to live!"

He gave one look at Marguerite, and tears came in his fine eyes. He dropped his head in his hands.

"Poor Rose!" he murmured. "Poor Rose!"

"She caught a bad cold," continued the Princess, "and it has turned to pneumonia."

"Poor Rose!" he murmured again. "Poor Rose!"

"She was a very pretty girl once," he continued, lifting his head, and turning towards Marguerite, "so pretty that I, young fool that I was, fell in love with her the first time I saw her—at the circus at Ostend."

Marguerite took his hand.

"When I saw your house last night," she said, "I realized what a brave man you are. No coward could have faced the misery of such a home and a drunken wife. Your life must have been one long torture."

"I tried to do my best," he answered in a low voice. "The best for her, the best for us both. It was very hard because she had got into such bad

## THE SACRIFICE OF FRITZ

---

habits, and I dare not trust her with money. I often thanked God, when I looked at her, that she had never had a child."

"I thanked God too, Fritz, when I sat by her bed last night for the same thing," Marguerite replied.

"Does she want for anything?" he asked anxiously.

"No, the money you gave me for her is quite sufficient. I do not think she will want anything long."

"Did she speak of me?"

"Yes, she was terribly sorry for the trouble you are in, and bitterly reproached herself that she had not made you more comfortable at home. That seemed to worry the poor creature more than anything. 'If I'd only kept off the drink,' she kept saying, 'it would have been all right.' Strangely enough, she did not seem to feel any jealousy for Miss Boulger. She seemed to blame herself for everything."

There was silence between them, and Marguerite took out her watch.

"The time has nearly gone," she said. "Before I go, let me implore you to reconsider your position. It may be that death will soon free you from that marriage tie, incurred in a rash moment of your youth, and which has estranged you from your kindred. It may be, Fritz, that you will have a chance of returning to your old life; I beg of you not to

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

throw this chance away. Let me engage a first-rate counsel to defend you, then put yourself heart and soul into the task of setting yourself free."

He looked at her for a moment.

"At the cost of Ethel's life, perhaps?" he asked in a quiet voice.

It was on the tip of her tongue to tell him that she was not worth the sacrifice of such a noble life as his, but she refrained. Inquiries had fully established, however, in her mind, the impression that Miss Ethel Boulger was not composed of the stuff of which heroines are made.

"No," he continued reflectively, "I've made my choice and I will stick to it."

The Princess Marguerite rose and pulled down her veil.

"It may be," she said, "that this is the last time I may have an opportunity of seeing you before your trial. The Court moves to Windsor soon, and I must go with it. Have you anything you would like to tell me before I go?"

"No," he said, after a pause, "let Rose have all she needs. You have been very good to her and to me. More than I could ever have dreamt of, more than I could have expected. God bless you for it. If Rose should die let everything be done for her that is possible out of the sum I gave you. I think there will be enough, if not you will find more in the same place, behind the wainscot in my bedroom,

## THE SACRIFICE OF FRITZ

---

where I was obliged to hide it from her for fear she would spend it in drink."

He took both the Princess' hands in his own and raised them to his lips, then in a moment she was gone, the last sound he had to remember her by being a stifled sob. Then the warder came and led him back to his cell.

In the murder of Sir John Boulger the daily, and, in fact, most newspapers had, for some time past, had an unusually rich source to draw upon both for fact and fiction. The latter, it need hardly be said, predominated; everything, short of absolutely trying the two accused persons in the columns of the newspapers, had been produced for the edification and amusement of the public, and incidentally for the profit of the newspaper proprietors concerned. Even fictitious parents had been discovered for Fritz by an enterprising reporter on a halfpenny morning paper, and duly interviewed in a village near the Hartz Mountains by him with much circumstance and elaboration.

But this feat of journalism had almost landed the paper concerned in an expensive libel suit, as the true son of this worthy couple, a very stout performer on the trombone in a German band then perambulating the suburban streets of London, had called at the office of the newspaper, and in a manner of speaking had stormed it with the strength of his language, both English and German being drawn

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

upon to supply sufficient emphasis for his denial that he was the Fritz Hoffmann then awaiting his trial for murder in Brixton Prison. The manager of the newspaper had congratulated himself upon settling the matter with the much-wronged German instrumentalist for a five-pound note. The subsequent performances of the German band that day had been almost entirely of a patriotic nature, engendered by much consumption of beer, and consisted mostly of the songs of the Fatherland.

Towards the beginning of the following December, the subject of the coming trial of Fritz Hoffmann and Ethel Boulger became once more the uppermost topic of the sensational Press, and this reached its zenith on the morning of the day itself.

It had been some time before announced, that the services of that eminent counsel Mr. Wentworth Ball, K.C., had been retained at a very heavy cost by the solicitors to Miss Boulger, but any reference to the counsel representing Fritz had been omitted for the very good reason that he had not secured the services of any.

The proceedings of the trial itself were of that stereotyped description so well known to the public through the newspapers.

The prisoners were brought from Brixton and Holloway Prisons respectively to that beautiful Palace of Justice which has risen on the site of the squalor and misery of the former Old Bailey.

## THE SACRIFICE OF FRITZ

---

There was none of the horror of the old court about it; they might have been attending a fashionable divorce case at the Law Courts, but for the presence of the blue-coated warders and policemen. Certainly the audience of elegantly attired ladies and gentlemen could not have been more select and representative of the *beau monde* had the trial been merely the washing of aristocratic dirty linen and the airing of the same in public with the history of much petty domestic squabbling between, say, a duke and duchess.

The case being called on, the two prisoners were brought up a flight of steps to the reserved pew, referred to technically as "the dock," and were there, after pleading, accommodated with seats.

Both were dressed in black. Ethel in a superbly cut triumph of a West-End tailor; Fritz in a frock coat and continuations of apparently equally respectable origin.

Appalled as Ethel evidently was by her surroundings, yet she looked much better than when visited by her brother and Featherstone in Holloway Jail; there was more colour in her cheeks and more confidence in her eyes, and this was the result of certain whispered intelligence conveyed to her that morning by her lawyers. A whisper wafted to them from Scotland Yard, conveying more by inference than absolute solid assertion, that it was unlikely that the case would be pressed home against the

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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female prisoner. True, there was the incident of the broken dagger found in her room, but this they had decided must have been put there by Hoffmann.

Looking at her sitting in the dock — so different to all other docks — there was not one person in that well-dressed assembly who believed for a moment that she would be hanged; there was not one person there who believed that she would be even convicted. And that gay assembly, as a body, were perfectly correct as the sequel showed.

Fritz, much thinner, white, and determined, stood erect at her side as they both pleaded, but she neither looked at him nor attempted to speak.

Their pleas of "Not Guilty" had no sooner been recorded, than the fact became apparent that Fritz was unrepresented by counsel. He was still immovable in his resolve; he felt that if he once attempted to clear himself, he would somehow have to drift into saying he left her looking at her sleeping father, the last person, as far as he knew, who saw him alive in this world. No; he believed her guilty, and he would suffer for her because he loved her. His road seemed perfectly clear and straight before him. It seemed to him that it was the course that some knight of old would have taken to save his lady's life and honour. To him it seemed a worthy, if not a noble, way of ending a life which had been of very little good, of a practical sort, either to himself or others.

## THE SACRIFICE OF FRITZ

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He never could understand what had prompted her to kill Sir John; he always had appeared the very type of a kind father to her, as far as he could judge, until the last morning of his life. He put it down, hopelessly, to a sudden impulse which had taken possession of her, born perhaps of her father's threat to disinherit her. He could not believe that it was anything else than a fit of sudden madness which had come over her, it was so foreign to the kind, gentle nature he always believed her to possess. The consideration of this fact was only another reason which made it more imperative that he should sacrifice himself for her.

The Court having taken due cognizance that the male prisoner was unrepresented by Counsel, forthwith appointed a Junior, a certain Mr. Greenworthy, to take care of his interests; which that gentleman at once commenced to do, by jotting down notes for a lurid speech to the jury which he trusted from the notice the case was attracting would be reported in full.

Then the trial began in earnest, with a terse opening speech by the Counsel for the Crown; setting forth the points against the prisoners, with what seemed like cruel nakedness; this finished there came the witnesses, the servants, especially those two who had seen Fritz return up the staircase, Inspector Frisner, various persons who had seen the two prisoners together in Kensington Gardens and other

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

places, meeting like lovers meet. But there was one person missing, who had given evidence before the magistrate, and this was Rose Hoffmann, the male prisoner's wife, for she had died a week before.

By the early part of the afternoon the case for the Crown was concluded, and Mr. Wentworth Ball, K.C., commenced his defence. It was very clear from the outset that he did not intend wasting time nor breath in endeavouring to extricate Fritz from the charge against him. He was evidently to be left to shift for himself; Mr. Ball had but one duty to perform, and that, to get his fair client out of the mire. He had received no further instructions, and he was hardly the man to go outside his brief. No, this course had become apparent on his masterly cross-examination of the witnesses for the prosecution; a piece of perfect work accentuated by the feeble and random questions put on poor Fritz's behalf by the well-meaning, but incompetent, Mr. Greenworthy. Even Fritz smiled at some of these. Mr. Wentworth Ball had not concluded his fine piece of oratory on Ethel Boulger's behalf, when the court adjourned for the day. The next day was to be the day of incident and excitement, and the fashionable crowd went forth into the wintry afternoon to discuss the pros and cons of the case over their fragrant tea-tables whilst the two prisoners were taken back to Holloway and Brixton respectively.

The smart people were up betimes the next day,

## THE SACRIFICE OF FRITZ

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and appeared in fresh toilets at the brand new court, well before the judge, ready to gladden his eyes and those of the jury with the last thing in "transformations" and expensive furs.

Fritz Hoffmann's firm jaw was set a little firmer perhaps that grey, cold December morning; his white face a little whiter from the realisation in the sleepless night of the ordeal that was before him.

His counsel had urged him after the previous day's sitting, when he had seen him in the cells below, to go into the witness-box and give his version of the affair, and he had refused. The counsel, still urging, and almost moved to tears in his youthful earnestness, had come to him again that morning, before he had gone up those steps to the dock, and he had again refused. Refused with renewed firmness, for he had caught a glimpse of Ethel's face just before, as she had been brought in from Holloway, almost fainting at the fear of what the day might bring her. No, his counsel had gone back to the court amazed at his persistency, but resolved to make a fight of it for him, whether he would or no.

Mr. Wentworth Ball, with every circumstance of sympathy, called Ethel Boulger herself to give the lie to the accusation against her; and sitting in the witness-box, she made her answers to the carefully worded questions he put to her in a voice at first almost inaudible, but rising as he led her on, until

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

they were firm and clear when she gave a denial to the fact that she knew Fritz Hoffmann to be a married man. There was not a quaver in her voice, when at the end she dramatically denied that she was the murderer of her father.

The Counsel for the Crown did not press her much; it was pretty well a foregone conclusion that she would be set free.

A servant was then called, who testified that she saw Miss Ethel coming from the bathroom, shortly before the murder was discovered, and in a way by this evidence confirming her young mistress's statement that she was in the bathroom at the time of the murder.

No; no one imagined for a moment that the pretty, delicate-looking young heiress would suffer, but with this dark-faced German chauffeur, it was quite a different matter.

When the time arrived for him to call witnesses none were called. When all expected him to go to the witness-box in his own defence, he did not go, but sat back in the dock, with his right hand covering his eyes. He had made his choice; he would stand by it.

He had to, for when Mr. Wentworth Ball had concluded a pathetic appeal to the jury, during the course of which both he and they were deeply affected and the court resounded with sniffs from the fashionably dressed ladies, Mr. Greenworthy rose

## THE SACRIFICE OF FRITZ

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nervously, and on behalf of the male prisoner informed the court that he did not intend to call witnesses.

At this announcement a kind of sigh fluttered through the crowded court; it was a sort of sorrowful admission that the inevitable had come; that the resolute-looking, dark-faced young man in the dock was guilty, and his life must pay the forfeit.

To some fortunate men there comes in the supreme moment of their lives a feeling that by one grand act of self-sacrifice it is possible to atone for much sin, and wipe out at one stroke the errors of a life of uselessness.

To Fritz Hoffmann in that moment of desolation came that feeling; he knew in his heart that the well-meant, far too fervent, oratory of his young counsel would avail him nothing; he was glad when he sat down again, and the red-robed judge opened his note-book to charge the jury.

Sitting by the side of the woman who he believed guilty and yet loved, to save whose life he was willing to give his own, Fritz listened stern-faced and white, to the measured sentences of the judge, to those learned words, which to the multitude were intended to be the sifting of the chaff from the grains of evidence, but which to the initiated and by intuition to the accused themselves perhaps, were a clear direction to the jury to acquit the woman and condemn the man.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

Fritz braced himself as the jury went away in silence to consider their verdict, and he for the time was taken to his cell below. He thought of noble knights long ago, who had given their lives for loved ladies — on the field of battle, not the scaffold, he remembered with a sigh — and tried to liken his act to theirs. He never thought for a moment whether the girl he was dying for was worthy of it; he never even asked himself whether she would value his sacrifice and reverence his memory for it in the days when he was gone; all he remembered was that she was a woman, and he loved her.

He thought of this when they brought him back to the dock, and he stood beside her, watching the faces of the jury in a mechanical way, as they answered to their names. He was not at all afraid, although his face was white and eager. It might have been the face of some early Christian giving his life for his Faith.

Fritz had never been a religious man, but in that moment, when his fate was so close upon him, there was some recollection in his heart of far-off days in his Fatherland when he was a child, and his mother had shown him a picture of the Sacrifice of Christ for mankind. In a dim way, it seemed to him that he was emulating that Sacrifice now, by giving himself for another.

The jurors had all answered to their names at

## THE SACRIFICE OF FRITZ

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last, and the Clerk of Arraigns arose and asked them for their verdict; it came at once:

The man, "Guilty."

The woman, "Not Guilty."

Then, with a smile upon his lips, Fritz saw the woman he had saved pass out from the dock to the world and liberty, and turning, faced the judge and — Death.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE CONTENTS OF THE CHEST

ANY person entering Hugh Featherstone's study at his little house in Dover Street on a certain December morning would have imagined himself in a banker's parlour; a large card-table which stood in one corner had been brought into the centre of the room under the electric light, and opened; on it were stacked, in little rouleaux of ten, thousands of tarnished gold coins, packed as close together as they could stand. On another table near were little heaps of precious stones, emeralds, pearls, rubies, and by itself with the electric light glinting and sparkling on it, a great yellow diamond of a surpassing size and brilliancy with a sprinkling of smaller diamonds round it. Over these heaps of treasure Mona Beauclerk hung with wide-open eyes and lips parted in ecstasy. Hugh Featherstone stood a little behind her smoking a cigarette, while the ancient oaken chest, only partly cleansed from its coating of gravelly earth, stood on the floor at his feet.

" You have locked the door, of course? " asked

## THE CONTENTS OF THE CHEST

---

Mona. "There's no possibility of the servants bursting in and seeing all this?"

"Not the slightest," he answered, walking over and trying the door again; "nobody will come in here."

Mona walked round the table full of jewels admiringly.

"Isn't it positively lovely," she exclaimed; "something quite too beautiful!"

"What is quite too beautiful?" asked Hugh.  
"The money?"

"No, you silly man," she answered, "the jewels. Cannot you understand a woman selling her *very soul* for such as these?"

"I can understand a woman in the general way," answered Hugh, "doing *anything*, especially for jewels. I have no doubt many a poor girl has sold hers for the temporary possession of some of these. Don't you think they were better buried?"

"No!" she answered sharply, "certainly *not*. I will wear them when I go to Court. Some of them at least."

"Doesn't your conscience prick you, Mona," he asked with a twinkle in his eye, "for becoming possessed of them in such an irregular manner? What would your husband say?"

"Hubert has already told me all about 'Treasure Trove,' but the only thing that is distressing me just now," she answered, "is, that I am wondering

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

whether that sanitary inspector will find out anything at Kensington."

Hugh laughed heartily and threw away his cigarette.

"I don't think you need worry yourself about that," he replied. "Haggerstone assured me that he would board in the top of the excavation and cover it with earth, long before the inspector arrived. Then there would only be the legitimate openings made for the repairs to the drains to be seen. Of course that shaft will have to be filled in again, with the earth in the shed, or something will happen to the Tube Railway."

"That's only a minor matter," responded Mona casually, "in comparison with being found out. But we haven't agreed how the division of all this is to be arranged yet." She pointed to the gold and jewels.

Hugh looked meditative and took out his notebook.

"I have all the particulars down here," he said, opening the book.

"Let's see, on that card-table are seven thousand guineas. By-the-by, that old scamp of an ancestor of mine collared three thousand for his share. He was determined to put himself on velvet."

Mona laughed heartily.

"Does that sort of thing run in your family?" she asked.

## THE CONTENTS OF THE CHEST

---

" You needn't be afraid," he answered smiling, " I am not going to *do* you out of your fair share. In fact, I propose you shall have all the jewels to start with."

Her eyes sparkled, but she controlled herself and answered him.

" No, no, that would never do. First of all, tell me what the expenses have been?"

He referred to his book again.

" The rent of the house, including taxes for a year — I expect we shall get rid of the lease easily by then — stands us in one hundred and fifty pounds. The mock drainage scheme cost one hundred, and the sinking of the shaft one hundred and eighty, including the men's fifty pounds; so we shall get out of it well under five hundred pounds."

" And what do you value the whole treasure at?"

" Well, that's rather difficult to say," he answered; " the jewels are no doubt the most valuable part of it, but the guineas are worth about two pounds apiece."

Mona raised her eyebrows.

" Then this tableful," she suggested, " is worth about fourteen thousand pounds?"

" Precisely, but of course that's rather a large parcel of old guineas to put on the market all at once."

" Yes, I realise that," she answered slowly; " but

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

no doubt you, as a man, would know much better how to dispose of them, than I, therefore —”

She stopped.

“ Therefore what? ” he asked.

“ Well, what I propose is this,” she replied presently, her eyes lingering lovingly on the jewels; “ give me a thousand of the guineas, just as a sort of keepsake. Then *you* keep the rest and choose any of the jewels you like — except the yellow diamond. What do you say to that? ”

“ That will suit me very well,” he answered; “ but I would rather that you choose the jewels.”

“ Very well,” she answered quickly, before he could alter his mind. “ So be it. Who do you want the jewels for — yourself or a friend? ”

Hugh's thoughts went at once to his liberated martyr, Ethel Boulger.

“ For a friend,” he answered somewhat confusedly, “ a lady.”

“ Dear Ethel? ” queried Mrs. Beauclerk.

“ Dear Ethel,” confirmed Hugh.

He wished at the moment that she was there to choose for herself.

“ Well,” proceeded Mrs. Beauclerk reflectively, “ we'd better see about packing these up.”

She cast her eyes over the jewels, and after a further period of reflection, selected the most doubtful looking of the emeralds, and put it aside for Hugh, with a sigh. Then some of the small rubies

## THE CONTENTS OF THE CHEST

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and a pearl or two were placed with it. Hugh thought with a smile that Ethel was not likely to blaze with jewels at this rate. He contemplatively took up a few diamonds, and Mrs. Beauclerk, taking the hint, placed them, in a burst of generosity, with the others in his heap. Finally, Hugh's share was duly selected and he proceeded to wrap it up in tissue paper.

"Are you going to take your thousand guineas with you, Mona," Hugh asked, "or shall I lock them up for you?"

"No," she replied, "I think I had better take them with me. It *might* get mixed with yours and cause confusion."

He had a smile as he produced a strong canvas bag, such as is used by bankers to carry silver in, and proceeded to transfer the little piles of guineas into it. This done, he tied it securely, and placed it by Mona. Then he quickly swept the remainder of the guineas into similar canvas bags and placed them in the chest. In the course of half an hour the two tables were cleared, Mrs. Beauclerk putting away her jewels in a leather bag, which she carried attached to her wrist. She borrowed a hand-bag of Hugh for her share of the guineas.

"That chest looks very ugly," she remarked. "At present it has the appearance of an unearthed coffin."

"I have provided for that," answered Hugh, pro-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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ducing a roll of canvas. "I am going to wrap this round it."

In a few minutes the chest was entirely covered and corded up. Then scarcely was their work finished, than came a rap at the door.

Hugh walked across and unlocked it.

"Who's there?" he asked.

The voice of the servant answered him.

"A gentleman to see you, sir — Mr. Beauclerk."

For a moment Mona and Hugh looked at each other, and their faces whitened; then a glance round the room reassured them.

Hugh looked inquiringly at Mona, and she gave him an affirmative nod; he walked across the room and threw open the door. Mona's husband at once strode past the servant and entered the room. His clear-cut, clean-shaven face was white and set, and his heavy, determined jaw was stuck out aggressively.

His keen lawyer's eyes gave one quick glance round the room, then his face relaxed; there were no suspicious circumstances. Mona stood perfectly cool and collected, buttoning her gloves; Featherstone, although a little white, met his glance perfectly fearlessly. There were the two open card-tables, the glaring electric light, and the oblong box covered with buff-coloured canvas, the furniture was all in perfect order, there was not the slightest evidence to show that Mona had come to the house

## THE CONTENTS OF THE CHEST

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to fulfil an assignation in the accepted sense of the term.

Mrs. Beauclerk was the first to speak, in that placid, even tone of affectionate inquiry which comes so easy to a woman under such circumstances, but the accomplishment of which is practically denied a man on such an occasion.

"Good gracious, Hubert!" she cried, abandoning the buttoning of the glove. "Whatever brings you here? There is nothing the matter, is there?"

Beauclerk, clever lawyer as he was, was non-plussed; he was well aware of the French adage, "*C'est le premier pas qui coûte*"; there was absolutely nothing on which to hang a complaint, and he did not quite know where that first step was going to lead him. There was but one point on which he could say a word — *the locked door*. He said his word on that point like a clever cross-examiner as he was.

"Whatever made you lock yourselves in?" he asked, in a tone of surprise.

"Well, it was like this, Hubert," explained his wife, still perfectly calm and collected. "Hugh was showing me some old jewels and laces belonging to his mother, and we locked the door to keep the servants out, in case they should see them and perhaps tell others, and the house might be broken into. Don't you think we were quite right?"

Mr. Beauclerk seemed but half convinced.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"Where are these jewels, might I ask?" he said, addressing Hugh.

"Well, most of them are in that box," explained Hugh, pointing to the corded chest. "Would you like to see them?"

For answer Mr. Beauclerk walked over to the shrouded box, and laying hold of one of the cords tried to lift it. Strong man as he was, he could only just raise one end.

"Rather heavy jewels, those of yours, Featherstone," he observed, "there must be a lot of 'em."

"Yes, there are," replied Hugh casually; "and there is a lot of old gold and silver plate too."

"Ah!" replied Beauclerk, after a slight pause, "perhaps that may account for it."

He took out his watch and looked at it with his mind on other things, then he carefully replaced it. He had very sensibly made up his mind as to what course to take under the circumstances. He evidently did not intend to leave them there together alone again; his legal training, with a strong leaven of jealousy, prompted him that it would be a prudent thing to keep the two under his own observation for the next hour or so.

"It is just half-past one," he said at last. "What do you two say to coming over to Prince's and having lunch with me?"

"We shall be delighted!" they answered together, in an unmistakable tone of relief, "and

## THE CONTENTS OF THE CHEST

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afterwards," added Mrs. Beauclerk, with an eye to improving the occasion, "you shall come to Bond Street, Hubert, dear, and buy me that turquoise ring you promised me."

## CHAPTER XIX

MRS. WILLOUGHBY

A FEW days after poor Fritz Hoffmann had been removed to the condemned cell in Pentonville prison, there to await execution, a slovenly-looking old man presented himself at Kensington Police Station and asked to see the inspector. Being confronted with that official, he made the following statement:

He and his missis had for nearly a year past been living at No. 220, Queen's Gate, as caretakers, the house being empty and to let. At the commencement of the previous July, both he and his wife concluded that their pleasant stay in the house was near its end — a lady had taken a violent fancy to the residence. This lady, whom they were given to understand by the agents, Messrs. Badminton, of Cromwell Road, was a rich widow, came almost every day to inspect the house, generally driving up in a hansom, and, when her visit was concluded, sending him, Botting, the deponent, for another hansom to drive away in. So used did they get to this lady's visits and her going about the house taking

## MRS. WILLOUGHBY

---

down notes of the repairs in a pocket-book, that at last they ceased to accompany her, letting her roam about the mansion quite free and unrestrained.

"Yes," replied the old man, in reply to a question from the inspector, "she were a very free lady with her money, and give me a crown at a time in the way of tips."

"Well," continued the inspector, who was getting slightly bored, "and what more have you got to say about the lady?"

"It's like this 'ere," continued Botting. "She came a'most every day until nearly the end of July, then she went away one day, and never came back no more."

"Well." commented the inspector mechanically — he had lost interest in the old man's relation, and was paring his nails with a sharp penknife — "what then?"

Botting did not answer at once, but commenced fumbling in the pocket of his old overcoat, and presently produced something wrapped up in newspaper. This he carefully unfolded and disclosed a curious-looking object made of green velvet and richly mounted in filagree silver work. It was the sheath of an old dagger, but with this curious attribute — it was *triangular*, like the scabbard of an old-fashioned bayonet.

"Just cast your eye over this 'ere," suggested Mr. Botting.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

The inspector did so casually, then handed it back again.

"Very pretty," he remarked.

"Well, this 'ere thing," continued Mr. Botting, "it 'pears, must ha' been dropped by the lady what I was telling you about. My missis found it at the foot of the ladder leading up on to the roof the same evenin' of the day the lady paid her last visit. We tried to find her to give it back to her, and went to the agent, Mr. Badminton, in the Cromwell Road. He wrote to her, and got his letter returned. She'd been staying at some big hotel, and had gone away and left no address."

"Then she disappeared altogether," asked the inspector suspiciously, suddenly waking up and taking an interest in the case. "Let's have a look at that thing again."

He took it in his hands and inspected it closely. Where had he heard of a triangular dagger before? The idea seemed familiar to him.

"Not knowin' what to do with the thing," continued Mr. Botting, who possessed an honest old pair of grey eyes, "my missis and me thought I'd better bring it round 'ere."

In a moment the recollection flashed across the inspector's mind. Of course, the Queen's Gate murder was committed with a triangular dagger!

He controlled a start, however, and turned to old Botting with a casual air.

## MRS. WILLOUGHBY

---

"I think you'd better leave this sheath with me," he said, "and we'll make inquiries about it. Let's see; what's your number in Queen's Gate?"

"No. 220," answered Botting, "two doors off where the murder was committed."

"Very well," replied the inspector, carefully blotting the entry in his note-book. "If we hear anything further, we'll let you know. Don't go away without giving us your address. Have you got a trade?"

"I was a carpenter by trade," answered Mr. Botting, exhibiting his thumb, "but I don't do no work now 'cept lookin' after houses. Me and the missis 'as got a matter of fifteen bob a-week comin' in, left us by the gentleman whose estate I worked on down in Kent."

"All right. That will do," replied the inspector, "Good-day."

For fully a quarter of an hour after old Botting left the inspector sat with the green velvet dagger-sheath in his hand, meditating. He knew full well that the Queen's Gate murder case was practically settled, and the accused condemned to death. He was wondering whether it would be worth while to disturb matters by producing the sheath.

"I'll take it to Inspector Frisner," he said at last, suddenly coming to a decision. "When he's got it, then the thing will be off my mind."



## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

That evening Inspector Frisner sat in his office at Scotland Yard with the green velvet sheath before him and the Kensington officer seated the other side of the table giving his account of the matter.

Frisner made no reply when he had finished; he still sat with the sheath in his hand, a very puzzled look on his sallow face, which had turned a shade paler.

"I'll look into this myself, Williams," he said at last, without giving any opinion on the point. "I shall be down that way, and I'll call at the house in Queen's Gate and see the old man."

Early the next morning, Frisner was at 220, Queen's Gate, and enjoying the privilege of an interview with Mr. and Mrs. Botting. The inspector wore a perturbed air, and his landlady had noted that morning that the jam-pot on his breakfast table had remained almost untouched, a sure sign that the inspector was troubled in his mind.

"I want you to tell me something about this lady," he began, addressing himself to Mrs. Botting, a white-haired old woman whose lined face showed considerably more intelligence than that of her husband. "The lady who came to look over the house several times and then disappeared. When did you see her last?"

"The last time as ever I see her," replied old Mrs. Botting after a pause for reflection, "was when she was coming down the drorin'-room flight to the 'all

## MRS. WILLOUGHBY

---

and she looked as white as a ghost. I supposed it was the 'eat 'ad upset her. I noticed her hand shook as she put it on the banister as she came down."

Frisner looked steadily into the old woman's face long after she had ceased speaking; he appeared to be gradually absorbing the information conveyed; with his hands resting on his thighs as he sat and his elbows sticking out, he had somewhat the appearance of a large toad, except that his dark eyes were much kinder.

"Now tell me," he said at last, "what was this lady like?"

Mrs. Botting paused once more to consider.

"A puffick lady," she vouchsafed at last, "as one could see by her 'ands and the di'mond rings on 'em, but a little givin, I should say without meanin' nothin' d'rogitory, to 'er drops."

"To her what?" queried the inspector.

"To 'er drops; I should say she was fond of liftin' her elbow," she explained.

The inspector cogitated.

"What reason have you for saying that?" he asked presently, rather sharply; "you musn't say things like that of a lady."

Old Mrs. Botting bridled, as no doubt he intended her to.

"When a lady sends for a full glass of brandy on a hot day and drinks it off, without summuch as a

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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drop o' water," replied the old woman, with some spirit, "why, I should think she might expect anybody to say she's given to drink."

The inspector rose abruptly from his seat.

"Show me where you found the dagger sheath," he said shortly, and old Mrs. Botting submissively led the way out of the kitchen where the interview had taken place, and commenced to laboriously mount the stairs before him. They slowly ascended, with many halts to give Mrs. Botting breath, until they reached the very top of the house.

"There!" exclaimed the old woman triumphant, but breathless, pointing to the floor, "*that's* where I found it."

She indicated a spot at the foot of a little staircase leading to a door, opening on to the roof; the detective knelt down and carefully examined the floor; then leaving the old woman at the foot, he mounted the staircase and opened the door leading on to the leads, the key being in the lock.

"You need not wait for me, Mrs. Botting," he said, before passing through the door. "I dare say I shall be some time up here."

Leaving her gazing up at him in astonishment, he disappeared on to the roof; here he looked about him for some time in the dull, hazy light of the December morning; and then proceeded to clamber over the low partiwall on the next roof; from this

## MRS. WILLOUGHBY

---

he passed to the next, which was the house occupied by the late Sir John Boulger.

He remained on this roof for some time in deep thought, gently pulling at his short side whiskers the while; then he retraced his steps to the empty house, and re-entered it by the little door, which he locked behind him and put the key in his pocket.

He was still in the deepest thought as he descended the stairs and eventually reached the kitchen; there he sat warming his hands by the grateful blaze of the fire.

"Tell me, Mrs. Botting," he said presently, "what was this lady like who went so frequently over the house, and what was her name?"

The old woman went to one of the kitchen drawers and fumbled there for a time, then returned to him with a dirty scrap of paper; it was an order to view the house.

"Please permit," it ran, "Mrs. Willoughby to view No. 220, Queen's Gate."

"Mrs. Willoughby," he repeated to himself, putting the paper in his pocket. "Mrs. Willoughby. And now, what was she like in appearance?" he asked.

The old woman at great length described her, leaving out no detail of her dress nor ornaments. At last the detective even was wearied with her reiteration of the feminine articles of attire.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

" You've got a good memory I can see, Mrs. Botting," he commented, " which may prove very useful to you, if not profitable. I should advise you to write all that down so that you can refresh your memory with it, if needful."

With two half-crowns clasped tightly in the palm of her right hand, Mrs. Botting watched Inspector Frisner descending the steps of the empty house, while her husband stood looking over her shoulder.

" A nice-spoken gentleman," he commented, as the officer departed, " as nice a spoken gent as ever I remember to have met."

His wife answered dubiously.

" I don't hold with them policemen," she remarked sententiously, " ower much they may be removed in their way of speaking and their 'igh manners. My opinion is as that pore lady's goin' to be in trouble."

The detective on his part was gently murmuring to himself:

" Auburn hair, evidently a wig; blue-grey eyes and a bewitching smile, natural; very white teeth, probably her own, or she wouldn't have shown them so often. Blue-grey eyes and a good figure! A nice-looking woman I should think."

That evening, as Inspector Frisner's attentive landlady was clearing away his tea things, she stopped in surprise and lifted the jam-pot to the light. The intelligent officer had consumed nearly

## MRS. WILLOUGHBY

---

a pound of the best whole fruit strawberry jam, an unfailing sign to the observant landlady that the detective had joy within his soul at the unravelment of some knotty point.

## CHAPTER XX

### HERR FLÜTZ

FOR a full fortnight Inspector Owen Frisner worked his hardest to discover the identity of the mysterious Mrs. Willoughby, the lady who had so suddenly fallen in love with No. 220, Queen's Gate, and who had so suddenly fallen out of love with it again; he worked with no abatement of energy, but he worked in vain. Meanwhile the date of Fritz Hoffmann's execution had been fixed, and the days were slowly drawing on towards it. The detective, almost at his wits' end, now sat in his office for long periods with his face buried in his hands, thinking.

Into one of these fits of abstraction there one day broke an old foreign acquaintance of the well-known officer, a certain Herr Flütz, head of the police in Bittenberg, the capital of the kingdom of Atavia.

Herr Flütz was a stout little man of about fifty, black bearded, with a bountiful crop of iron-grey hair, cut *en brosse*, a fat, bespectacled Teutonic face, rather red from overmuch good living, and a broad mouth designed by Nature apparently especially for the purpose of smoking large, strong German cigars.

He entered Frisner's room at New Scotland Yard,

## HERR FLÜTZ

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one cold, stormy afternoon towards the end of the first week in January within a few days of the date fixed for Fritz Hoffmann's execution; he had between his fat lips the usual strong cigar, and he made straight for the blazing fire and warmed his great hands at it, for the day was bitterly cold.

"I vould not go through London mit out to come and zee you, mein friend Frisner," he said cordially. "I haf come to vish you de gomplements of the season."

"Thank you, thank you, Herr Flütz," replied the inspector, waking from his reverie, rising and taking the foreign detective's extended hand. "The same to you and many of them."

"I haf been to Scotland," proceeded the Herr, "to Edinburgh, on bizness. I have tasted 'toddy,' de national *ponche*. It is goot, vare goot, but I do not zink dit is 'ealthy for the stommach; I prefer our bier — good lager bier."

Frisner nodded his assent.

"Presently, when you have had a warm," he suggested, "we will go out and have some, if you don't mind the wind."

The Teuton grunted assent, adding an "Ach so!" then turned his face to the blaze and became absorbed in it.

"We haf hat great changes in Atavia since I haf the blesure of seeing you, Mr. Inspector," he said presently. "Our king's brother is dead."

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"So I have heard," responded Frisner.

"It will make great differences in the succession to de trone," proceeded Herr Flütz, "now the king's younger brother comes in vid his two vild sons. The king, you know, has no children."

"I am aware of it," commented Frisner. "Who is likely to succeed, though, to the crown after the present king's brother, the heir apparent?"

Herr Flütz shook his head solemnly.

"The Grand Duke of Brenberg," he replied slowly, "has two sons, Otto and Frederick; both of zem are very vild young men."

"Indeed," commented Frisner; "boys will be boys."

The old Herr looked at him and grunted.

"Dese are worse dan dat," he replied solemnly. "One of dem, de elder one, who was educated in England, has disgraced his family."

The recollection of it seemed quite to sadden him. He turned his fat face to the blaze again.

Then suddenly recollecting apparently that Frisner might ask him some more questions on this point, which he might not be able to answer comfortably, he hastened to change the subject of their conversation.

"Anyting fresh vid you, Mr. Inspector?" he asked, with a conciliating smile; "anyting fresh since I haf had de blesure of seeing you in Baris?"

"No," replied Frisner meditatively, "I don't

## HERR FLÜTZ

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think so; nothing that would interest you, at any rate."

Again there was a pause, whilst the foreign police officer contemplated the flames.

"I dort," he said presently, "dat you hat a gontreeman of mine awaiting the executioner, vat you call him, Jack Ketch?"

"Do you mean Fritz Hoffmann, the chauffeur?" asked Frisner.

The other nodded his head.

"Dat is zo," he replied.

"The man certainly has a Teutonic name," continued Frisner, the black cloud gathering on his face again, "but we have found out very little about him. We have not succeeded in discovering where he was born even."

Herr Fritz nodded his head anxiously.

"Vot you call a dark horse, eh?" he asked with a smile, which his eyes belied.

"Yes, a very dark horse," replied Frisner, as if the whole subject distressed him.

Again there was a pause between the two men, the bright blaze of the fire lighting up their faces, whilst the rising wind howled without.

"Vat a gread vind," remarked Herr Flütz at last; "I am clat dat I do not cross de Channel to-night."

"Yes, it will be a pretty stiff crossing to-night," Frisner commented, as he took a fat cigar held out

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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to him by the Herr, "even if the boat makes the attempt. They have got rather afraid of crossing in storms now since that awful wreck at the Hook of Holland."

He lit the cigar and the two puffed together in distinct contravention of the rules of Scotland Yard, which forbade smoking *absolutely*; there was, however, but one Frisner, and he would have been a bold man indeed who would have ventured to report him for smoking in his office, especially when a foreign detective had visited him.

At last Flütz took his cigar out of his mouth and blew a great cloud of smoke after it.

"I haf a favour to ask you, Herr Inspector," he said; "I vill haf a private interview mit dat man Hoffmann."

Frisner looked up in surprise.

"What on earth can you want with Hoffmann?" he asked.

"I vould see him out of curiosity," replied the foreigner quickly. "I haf it in my mind dat perhaps I can recognize him."

"It's very unusual in the case of a condemned man," remarked Frisner.

"Not in *our* case," replied Flütz. "If you come to Bittenberg, vould you not expect me to do de same for you as an act of international courtesy?"

This argument left Frisner without an answer.

"When do you want to go to him?" he asked.

## HERR FLÜTZ

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"Now, at once," replied the detective eagerly.

Frisner left the fire and went back to the writing-table on which the telephone receiver stood. He rang up a number and held a brief conversation, breaking it off to ask a question of Flütz.

"Would you like me to go with you, or shall I send someone else?" he asked.

"I lief dat to you," responded the foreigner abruptly. "I only stipulate that I see Hoffmann alone."

Frisner gave him one quick glance, then resumed his conversation at the telephone.

He had not replaced the receiver and returned to the fire three minutes when there came a knock at the door, and a tall man with the unmistakable look of a police officer entered.

"This is Sergeant Benson," said Frisner, with a nod towards the new-comer. "If you are ready, Herr Flütz, he will take you in a hansom to Pentonville Prison. There I have arranged that you can have an interview with the condemned man."

"Dank you, dank you, Mister Inspector," replied Flütz briskly. "How you do, Sergeant Benson?" he added affably to the waiting officer; "I vill not keep a moment until I light a cigar." He took two from his large, well-stuffed case, and gave one to the sergeant.

"It may be, Mister Inspector," he remarked, buttoning up his overcoat, "dat I come back to see you

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

after I haf seen Hoffmann. You will be here still?"

"I shall be here till six or seven o'clock," replied Frisner. "I've got a lot of work to do."

"Ach, den dere is plenty time, *plenty time*," responded the Teuton amiably, as he thrust his arm through that of his guide. "Sergeant Benson, ve will go haf glass bier before ve start."

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Frisner had almost forgotten all about Herr Flütz and his visit, immersed as he had been for nearly three hours in a pile of work, when there was a knock at the door, and a police messenger entered rather hurriedly, and handed him a card.

"Herr Flütz again!" exclaimed Frisner.

"Yes, sir," commented the man, "and he has a lady with him."

"A lady! Did she give her name?"

"No, sir. She's a young lady wearing a thick veil. The old gentleman's in a terrible state."

"What's the matter with him?" asked Frisner.

"He's in a great state of excitement, sir."

"You'd better show them up at once," said Frisner, putting away his papers in a drawer.

In a few minutes the man returned, ushering in Herr Flütz, who walked with great submission and respect behind a young lady closely veiled. The messenger had hardly left the room when this veil was thrown back, and Frisner found himself looking

## HERR FLÜTZ

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into the piquant face of the Princess Marguerite of Valois; the sweet face, however, bore deep traces of much recent sorrow and weeping. The Princess made a slight bow, then seated herself in a chair a little distance from the fire. Frisner of course remained standing.

The excited Flütz stood respectfully by her, and seemed burning to speak, but anxiously awaited her permission. This she gave presently by a nod; then the floodgates of the foreign detective's English vocabulary were opened, and the words came in a great rush.

"Herr Inspector!" he cried excitedly, "I haf met Highness at de prison; there has been great mistake, *very great mistake!* Dis man Hoffmann is not guilty."

"He has been convicted by an English jury all the same," commented Frisner, "that is very strong presumption that he *is* guilty."

At his words the foreigner became almost frantic.

"I tell you," he almost shrieked, "dat it is *alla* mistake. You haf de wrong man. Quite de wrong man."

"Nevertheless," responded Frisner, whose dignity was touched by his tone. "I fear he will be hanged."

The Princess clasped her hands and turned towards Frisner.

"For God's sake don't say that," she cried.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"You would hang an innocent man. I *know* that he is innocent."

The Teuton detective, emboldened by the Princess' words, took a stride towards the writing-table and brought his fist down heavily upon it.

"Herr Inspector!" he cried furiously, "*I defy* you aushängen that man. *I defy de whole British nation to hang dat man!*"

Frisner, usually so self-possessed, turned an alarmed glance towards the speaker.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Flütz replied by making a bold request.

"Take me to your King," he said, "and I will tell him."

"That is impossible, of course," replied the Scotland Yard officer, considering a few moments; "will the Home Secretary do?"

"Home Secredary," replied Flütz, "Home Secredary; *was ist das?*"

"The Home Secretary," explained the Princess, "is the King's Minister, who has to do with prisoners."

"Den let us go to Home Secredary, Highness," responded Flütz, "ve vill go dere at once."

Frisner in the most courteous manner apologized to the Princess, and went to the telephone. He rang up the Home Office, then putting back the receiver on to the stand waited for the answering ring.

In those few moments of silence while he waited

## HERR FLÜTZ

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the whole story of the Queen's Gate murder floated through his mind, and the theory, evolving in it, which had its origin in the discovery of the green velvet dagger sheath. Brief as the period of relaxation was, it caused him to form a great resolve in his quick-thinking mind. Henceforward he was heart and soul with the Princess and Herr Flütz in their endeavour to save Fritz's life!

The ring came at the telephone bell; the Home Office had woken up.

The inspector took the receiver off the stand, and made an inquiry concerning the Home Secretary; his face assumed a look of annoyance as he listened to the answer; he turned towards the others.

"I regret to say," he began, "that the Home Secretary is in attendance on his Majesty."

"And vere," asked Flütz, "is his Madjesty?"

"I can answer that," broke in the Princess.  
"The King is at Biarritz."

Frisner started back.

"*Biarritz!*" he repeated, "and Hoffmann is to be hanged in two days."

"*Gott in Himmel!*" cried the Teuton, as a great puff of wind from the storm without blew a cloud of smoke down the chimney.

"*Gott in Himmel*, but you can telegraph, Mister Inspector!"

"Yes, of course we can telegraph," repeated Frisner, and took out his watch. "It is now ten min-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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utes past seven. I will, with your Highness' permission," he added, as he turned towards the Princess, "go across to the Home Office, state the particulars, and get them to wire to the Minister. Perhaps your Highness will be inclined to wait my return?"

"Certainly," replied Marguerite; "I would wait all night if necessary."

Frisner bowed and left; then the Princess, motioning Herr Flütz to a chair, waited patiently for nearly three-quarters of an hour for his return; meanwhile, the storm howled without. At last he returned, looking very white and worried, and stood before the Princess without saying a word.

"Well!" she said impatiently.

"I will not deceive your Royal Highness for a moment," said Frisner in reply. "The storm has for the time quite demoralised the telegraph system in France; we cannot get a message through to Biarritz, and they cannot tell us when the line will be clear again."

"My God!" exclaimed the Princess, striking her hands together in despair. "What an awful calamity!"

Flütz sat quite broken down, with his hands clasped together in front of him.

Then the Princess sprang to her feet.

"There is but one thing to be done," she cried.

## HERR FLÜTZ

---

"We must go off to Biarritz to the King ourselves."

Frisner stood thinking with his hand to his chin, turning her words over in his mind.

"Should we be in time?" he said at last, as if asking himself the question.

"Good God!" exclaimed the Princess, overhearing him, "don't say that, Mr. Frisner. Don't say there is no time to save him!"

Frisner without answering walked to a shelf, and taking down a "Bradshaw" studied it for some minutes.

"We could catch to-night's express," he muttered, with a glance at his watch, "and arrive in Paris to-morrow morning. Leave Paris to-morrow morning, arrive Biarritz to-morrow night. Ah!" he cried, throwing down the book, "too late to catch the return train to-morrow night. The morning train would be too late. We should not reach London again until after the execution."

The Princess, with a heartrending cry, buried her face in her hands and broke down, sobbing bitterly.

The two men stood looking at her in the deepest commiseration; then Herr Flütz taking out a large coloured silk handkerchief, blew his nose noisily, and turned suddenly to Frisner.

"Not zo fast, Mister Inspector," he said, "not zo fast. You haf forgot dat ve could leave Biarritz by motor!"

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

For a moment the English detective's face brightened, then it fell again.

"We could not catch up the Paris express," he answered, "it travels too quickly. Probably at fifty or sixty miles an hour."

"Dat ist zo," answered the Teuton, "but ve could come all de way to Calais by motor."

"That will not be necessary," replied Frisner a moment later, after looking at the "Bradshaw;" "we could get an express from Bordeaux to Paris, and take the motor on with us; then, if there is no boat train, we can either get on by motor or take the best train we can. I see by the 'Bradshaw' we shall only be one hour behind the Biarritz express at Paris, allowing for a speed by motor of thirty miles an hour."

The detective put his pencil back in his pocket after a slight calculation on a slip of paper.

"But de boat, de boat!" exclaimed Flütz; "how are we to cross de Channel?"

"I think I can manage that all right," he answered, after a pause. "If they know it is Scotland Yard work, I can get a Trinity boat sent over to Calais and kept there with steam up until we arrive. At this rate we should be back in London the night before the execution."

"God bless you for that!" exclaimed the Princess, who had been listening attentively to the last part of their conversation.

## HERR FLÜTZ

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“ When do you start? ”

Frisner took out his watch.

“ Now, your Royal Highness,” he repeated promptly; “ we start in five minutes if Herr Flütz is ready.”

Flütz buttoned his heavy coat around him.

“ I haf been ready dis hour past,” he observed.

“ Then God bless you and speed you both!” cried the Princess, taking their two hands in hers, “ and send you back in time to save the noblest man that breathes.”

## CHAPTER XXI

### BY THE KING'S COMMAND

AFTER the storm comes a calm; for one whole night and day the great tempest, remembered for years after, raged whilst Herr Flütz and Detective Inspector Frisner were on their journey to Biarritz; on the next day, the day of their return, it abated and was intermittent, and now the third day, the morning of Fritz Hoffmann's execution, broke fine and clear; but the straggling, weak daylight did not bring with it the two detectives with the reprieve. The latest telegraphic news from the coast stated that a tremendous sea was running in the Channel "mountains high."

In the room of the Governor of the prison, a bright, comfortable apartment, in which a cheery fire blazed, were three persons — the white-haired governor, the prison chaplain, and the Princess Marguerite. The two former had just entered. Dressed entirely in black, her face absolutely devoid of colour, Marguerite sat anxiously watching the governor's face. Hours before daylight she had been admitted, by his special permission, to that room, to sit and watch, and *listen*.

## BY THE KING'S COMMAND

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She had sat hour after hour in one attitude before the fire which had been kindled for her comfort, and now the governor and the chaplain had come to her to try and offer some consolation in her bitter, self-imposed task.

The governor, an experienced old man of the world, asked no questions. He saw there a Royal Princess, and knew that she had been coming to visit the imprisoned chauffeur almost from the beginning of his incarceration, admitted by the unquestionable permission of a person very high in authority.

He knew that it was a most extraordinary thing for a lady of Royal blood to do, but it was no business of *his*. If he thought at all, he put down the condemned chauffeur as perhaps the illegitimate half-brother of the Princess. The result of some *liaison* it might be of her father, who was known to have led a gay life. At any rate it was not *his* affair; he considered, according to his lights, that his duty in the case was to show the Princess all the attention which an officer and a gentleman should.

The chaplain, a dark, clean-shaven priest of the Catholic Church, offered no opinion on the point. If he had any ideas on the subject — and he was very thoughtful at times — he kept them to himself.

The Princess looked up as the two entered the room, and unclasped her hands.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"What news?" she asked feverishly.

Neither for a moment answered her; the old governor stooped and busied himself with poking the fire; the chaplain did not feel himself called upon to speak, but looked towards the Governor expectantly.

The old man turned round slowly.

"I regret to inform your Royal Highness," he said at last, "that we have received no news."

The Princess dropped her head in her hands again, and moaned.

"What can have become of them! What can have become of them! They should have been here last night."

The priest walked over to her and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"I beg you to have courage," he said; "this young man's life is in the hands of God!"

"Yes, I know it; yes, I know it," she answered quickly; "but it is hard, very hard. How is he?"

"I left him," answered the priest slowly, "not a quarter of an hour ago. He is very brave."

"Does he complain of the non-arrival of the messengers?"

"No; like the good Christian and noble man that he is, he has prepared himself to meet the worst."

"God save him, God help him!" she sobbed.

There was silence in the room for fully a minute;

## BY THE KING'S COMMAND

---

the Governor walked to the window and looked out, the priest took a seat by the Princess.

"Tell me the time," she asked presently of the governor. "I have let my watch run down."

The old gentleman took his large gold watch out of his pocket, with a trembling hand.

"A most extraordinary thing!" he exclaimed with suspicious surprise, "my watch has stopped, too!"

The Princess glanced round the room, then ran to the mantelpiece and looked at the clock on it; it had stopped.

She struck her hands together in a frenzy.

"You are deceiving me!" she cried. "You have stopped the clock!"

She ran to the priest.

"You at least will not deceive me, Father," she cried; "tell me, I beseech you, the time?"

He slowly took his watch from his pocket opened it, and answered her slowly.

"It is nearly eight o'clock, your Royal Highness."

"And at nine—" she almost shrieked.

The Governor came over to her and spoke in a low earnest voice.

"I earnestly pray," he began, trembling with emotion, "I earnestly pray that your Royal Highness will reconsider your resolve of remaining here. No good whatever can be done by it. I have a car-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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riage waiting to drive you back to the palace. Should any reprieve arrive, I will acquaint you immediately by a special messenger."

"And if it should *not*," cried the Princess frantically, "if it should *not*?"

The governor shrugged his shoulders gently, and walked away.

She followed him and laid her hand on his arm.

"Cannot you delay a little," she begged; "cannot you invent some excuse? Just think, the reprieve may be at this moment hurrying on the road."

"My dear lady," he answered gently, "I have no power. It is the Sheriff who has charge of it all."

"Then where is the Sheriff?" she cried.

Almost in answer to her words, the door opened, and a tall middle-aged man, with a long black beard, entered, and went straight to the governor: his face was very white and his hand shook violently as he gave it.

"For God's sake, major," he said excitedly, "give me some brandy, this awful affair has terribly unnerved me."

The Governor rang a bell for an attendant, and turning to the new-comer whispered for a moment in his ear. Then the long-bearded gentleman turned and bowed low to the Princess.

"This is the Sheriff, your Royal Highness," explained the governor.

## BY THE KING'S COMMAND

---

Marguerite was fast losing all semblance of calmness; her face was perfectly white, her lips trembling, and her eyes, which were ever nervously turned towards the stopped clock, red with weeping.

She went to the Sheriff with nervous, twisting hands, and he looked down at her pityingly.

"Oh!" she cried, "if you are the Sheriff you can stop this horrible thing."

In a rapid, excited voice she began to explain that the detective Frisner was on his way back from Biarritz with a reprieve; many of her words were almost incoherent, but the Sheriff listened to her with the utmost patience, his white face full of sympathy for her.

"I have heard of it, your Royal Highness," he said at last, "but I am powerless. I assure you, on my word as a gentleman, I am powerless. I have received the warrant, practically from the King, and I am bound under great penalties to see the sentence carried out. I hate and loathe my position. It is not one of my seeking; I attended the court when I was chosen Sheriff, and used every argument to beg myself off, but it was useless. It is an office we magistrates all hate, and no one will take it unless forced. I know very little of this case, but I sympathise with your Royal Highness' grief as deeply as any man can." He gave a great sob and broke down utterly. An attendant entering the room with a decanter of brandy and glasses

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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brought also a telegram for the Princess. The man's hands shook as he handed it to her on the tray, and his face too was ghastly white, the prevailing colour of most countenances in a prison on the morning of an execution.

The Princess broke off in her conversation with the sheriff, and tore the telegram open; it was from a person she had stationed at Dover to keep her informed of the first sight of the Trinity steamer, and had been sent off apparently as soon as the telegraph office had opened. She read it aloud :

"Trinity boat aground on Goodwin Sands two o'clock this morning. Lifeboat now returning from her into harbour. Will wire again, when have met it."

Marguerite rushed to the sheriff.

"See," she cried, "they were on board that Trinity steamer, and have evidently been taken off by the lifeboat. This telegram was sent off at 7:10. In a fast motor they might reach here before 9—" She broke off, and struck her forehead violently with her hand. "Oh, my God!" she cried and sank down in a chair.

The Sheriff and the Governor — the former fortified with brandy — exchanged a look. They had made up their minds that the Princess must be induced to leave at any cost.

The Sheriff walked gently over towards her.

"Your Royal Highness, I will do all that I can

## BY THE KING'S COMMAND

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to delay," he said, trying to soothe her, "that I promise solemnly; but I must insist that you now leave the prison. I *insist*, for your sake."

"No, no, no!" cried Marguerite, throwing up her arms piteously. "I will *not* go. If I go you will hasten, and kill him at once to get it over. No, no, no, I will not go!"

As she spoke the attendant re-entered the room and addressed the Governor in a nervous voice —

"Balmwood is outside, sir," he said. "I couldn't keep him away."

The door which he held was forced open and there entered a great rough-looking man, dressed in rusty black, and carrying in his hand a coil of rope.

"Yus, here's Balmwood 'isself," he remarked. "I wants to see the Governor, and I *will*."

The Governor turned towards the intruder with an assumption of authority, but his voice wavered as he spoke to him. Like every one else he had a horror and loathing for the man.

Balmwood was the executioner.

"I've had a few words with the doctor," replied the man, not in the least abashed, but putting the hand holding the rope behind his back as he saw the lady, "that's what it is. I ses this 'ere Hoffmann ought to 'ave 'arf a 'underweight of lead put in his pockets or the drop'll never do it. 'Es got a rare strong thick neck. I ses — "

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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The Governor, with a glance at Marguerite — who fortunately did not understand all the man said — turned in a fury on the executioner.

"Leave this room at once!" he cried, pointing to the door.

"It's all very well for you to bluster," answered the man, who evidently was not perfectly sober. "I ain't afraid of yer. Suppose I chucked the job up, who would you get to hang the man, I shuuld like to know? If there's any bungle over this, and he struggles, and it gets into the papers, you'll be the one to suffer mind, don't blame me."

He withdrew slowly to the door and lumbered out, with a longing look at the decanter of brandy on a side table.

There was a distinct air of relief in the room when the man had left it; he had scarcely, however, passed the door when the Governor's attendant entered with another telegram. It was for the Princess. She tore it open and then, with a look of triumph on her face, read it aloud —

"Frisner with Flütz left here in fast motor for London at 7:30."

"Tell me the time," Marguerite cried, rushing to the Sheriff, and before he could be stopped, took out his watch and told her.

## BY THE KING'S COMMAND

---

"It is now just ten minutes to nine," he answered innocently.

"Oh, my God!" she cried, frantically throwing up her arms, "ten minutes to nine, and they are not here!"

Then her overstrained nature gave way; she tottered and would have fallen fainting to the floor had not the Governor caught her and laid her on a couch; she was quite insensible.

"Now we must lose no time," cried the Governor hurriedly; "this awful scene has lasted long enough. Here, Williams," he cried to the attendant who was still in the room, "go and fetch the head-warder's wife to wait on this lady. I warned her last night to be on the lookout. Now," he continued, turning to the Sheriff, "I have an opportunity of speaking to you."

He took a large official letter from his pocket.

"I was so worked upon yesterday," the Governor proceeded, "by the Princess's account of Detective Inspector Frisner's journey to Biarritz to obtain a reprieve for Hoffmann, that I put myself in communication with the Home Office during the afternoon. The Home Secretary was expected back during the evening from Biarritz, where he had been in attendance on the King. He duly arrived, and the matter was at once put before him. This is his reply, which I received by special messenger early this morning:

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

“ ‘ SIR,— I am requested by the Home Secretary to inform you that he knows nothing of the incidents referred to in your communication of yesterday with reference to a possible reprieve for the man Fritz Hoffmann, now lying under sentence of death in Brixton Prison. The execution will therefore take place at 9 o’clock this morning as previously arranged.

“ ‘ I have the honour to be, sir,

“ Your very obedient servant,

“ ‘ WILLIAM MATTERSON.’ ”

“ That’s pretty conclusive,” said the Sheriff with a sigh after a pause. “ I must say I am sorry, very sorry, for that young lady there; but there is nothing to be done now but to get it over as soon as possible.”

The Governor gave a decisive nod.

“ Come,” he said.

They each gave one more compassionate look at Marguerite, lying white and happily oblivious of what was about to take place. The chief warder’s wife, sympathetically attending on her, had removed her hat, and her long black hair was flowing on her shoulders.

Thus they left her and passed out into the stone-paved corridor. The long passage extended right into the interior of the prison, the Governor’s official room being within convenient distance of the cells.

## BY THE KING'S COMMAND

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About midway down this long corridor, a little group was gathered outside the door of a cell, which apparently was apart from the others. The group consisted of half-a-dozen warders, and a gentleman in a tall hat, the prison doctor; the latter had his watch in his hand and was looking impatiently towards the Governor's room.

As the latter, with the Sheriff, came down the passage, there was a look of inquiry on the faces of all the waiting warders. Another warder emerged from a cell as they passed, saluted and addressed the Governor.

"Shall we begin to toll the bell, sir?" he asked.

The Governor thought for a moment, then answered him quickly:

"Yes."

The doctor approached.

"No reprieve then, sir?" he asked the Governor.

"No reprieve."

The head warder was standing forward, and the Governor beckoned to him.

"We will get this business over as soon as possible now, Marton," he said; "send the executioner in."

The man saluted, and in a few moments Balmwood and an assistant, a man of the same type as himself, emerged from an empty cell, where they had been apparently chewing tobacco, and followed the head-warder, through the door before which

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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the warders stood, into the condemned cell. Balmwood carried in his hands a broad leather belt with little straps attached to it; his assistant bore a similar smaller one.

Then the prison-bell commenced tolling.

Within three minutes the door of the cell was opened, and there emerged the head-warder, and following close behind him, with his arms strapped to his sides, Fritz Hoffmann, the condemned man; on the broad belt which encircled him the executioner kept a firm hand. The priest in cassock and surplice walked by Fritz's side.

Dressed in the black clothes he wore at his trial without collar or tie, Fritz Hoffmann's face and neck, were as those of a dead man; but white and ghastly as he was, he showed no fear. His eyes were half closed and cast on the ground for the most part, unless he raised them in response to some word of the priest's; but he walked with a firm, unfaltering step to his death, as if he carried with him some pride of race which sustained him and held him as it were above common fear even in that supreme moment. Falling into some sort of order, this procession, the Sheriff and Governor leading, moved slowly up the corridor in the direction of the Governor's room, but towards a door which now stood open, leading into the prison yard.

The prison-bell continued to toll.

Scarcely ten paces had been covered by the

## BY THE KING'S COMMAND

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doomed man when the door of the Governor's room far up the passage flew open, and from it rushed the Princess Marguerite, her long hair streaming over her shoulders. She was closely followed by the woman who had been attending her.

"What is that bell?" she cried loudly as she came out. Then she caught sight of the approaching procession, headed by the Governor and the Sheriff. She gave one shriek upon another and rushed towards it.

"Good God! She has escaped from the warder's wife," exclaimed the Governor. "What a fool I was to admit her this morning at all!"

Marguerite passed the Governor and Sheriff like a flash before any one could stay her, and in a moment she flung her arms around Fritz's neck.

"No, no, no. You shall not kill him," she cried frantically. "You shall not kill him! You do not know — "

She said no more; there was a wild cry and a great commotion at the farther end of the corridor, and two men came running up as if for dear life. The leader of the two was Inspector Frisner, and he waved a paper in his hand.

"A reprieve! A reprieve!" he cried at the top of his voice.

Even he, the staid detective, had lost his presence of mind. Following him as well as he could was Herr Flütz, puffing and blowing.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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" You will not *aushängen* him at your beril!" he exclaimed indignantly.

" What do you mean by reprieve?" asked the Governor, when Frisner reached him. " I have this morning received definite orders from the Home Secretary to proceed with the execution."

" That may be, sir," he answered. " I do not doubt it, but this is a reprieve from the *King himself*. See his signature." He held out a large square sheet of paper.

" Tamn Home Secredary!" added Herr Flütz.

## CHAPTER XXII

### IN THE GOVERNOR'S ROOM

WITHIN five minutes Fritz was sitting in an arm-chair before a blazing fire in the Governor's room, dazed and blinking at the flames, but with the colour distinctly returning to his pallid face.

The doctor held his wrist in one hand, and an empty glass in the other. He had just administered a strong dose of brandy, and was watching its effect.

In place of the rope, which in the ordinary course would by this time have encircled his neck, Marguerite's soft arms were clasped round it, and her head lay on his shoulder as she alternately laughed and cried.

"What on earth delayed you?" asked the Governor of Frisner, who with Herr Flütz was standing by. "Why did you not telegraph?"

"The whole journey, sir," answered Frisner, "was one chapter of accidents. The storm had interfered with the telegraph wires abroad and everything was in confusion; besides, we had no cipher code with us, and an open telegram would

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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we knew have been useless. We decided that the only hope lay in pressing on."

"When we reached Biarritz we found that the Home Secretary had left for England by the train which had just started, and that nearly nonplussed us, but Herr Flütz took it upon himself to see his Majesty."

"And what took place?" asked the Sheriff, who had just helped himself to a liberal brandy and soda.

"I don't know, sir," replied Frisner; "I was not allowed to be present. Herr Flütz was admitted to his Majesty alone, that evening, after the King had dined."

"Then you don't know what took place?" asked the Governor.

"No, only that Herr Flütz came back to me with the reprieve in his hand, which had been written entirely by his Majesty."

"And then you started back, I suppose?" demanded the Sheriff.

"Yes, sir; we had engaged a motor, and we started back in the dark for Bordeaux. We lost the way once, but our chauffeur, who was a sharp chap, picked it up again, and we got into Bordeaux in time to catch the Paris express. At Paris we lost a lot of time, and had to come on to Calais by a stopping train. You can imagine what our feelings were in that train."

"It must have been awful!" ejaculated the Prince.

## IN THE GOVERNOR'S ROOM

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cess who was now listening to the narrative with great interest.

"We got to Calais at last," continued Frisner, "and there we found the Trinity boat waiting for us, but there was a tremendous sea running. Nevertheless we embarked and set out for Dover; I never was in such a sea in my life. I thought every moment we should have been swamped. The engineer crowded on every pound of steam he could to make headway against the tide and wind; but it was terrible work. First the shaft got hot, and they had to stop altogether for some time to cool it. Then at about twelve o'clock the final catastrophe occurred; meeting an extra large wave, the engines raced, and, as the chief engineer said, 'got tied in a knot.' Then we drifted about for two hours trying to mend them under a solitary foresail, and eventually at about two o'clock got driven on the Goodwin Sands. Of course Flütz and I gave ourselves up for lost then, and Fritz Hoffmann too, but in response to our rockets the Dover lifeboat took us off, and brought us in. Then we secured the best motor in the town and started for London.

"My word!" exclaimed the detective, as he finished, "I don't know how many summonses we shall get for furious driving. We paid no attention to the police on the road, and we were called upon to stop about six times. My impression is we shall have a job to pacify some of those constables. One

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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was within an ace of being run over, and owed his escape more to good luck than to our chauffeur's careful driving. When the man was given to understand he was driving police officers he simply threw all discretion to the winds and enjoyed himself. My opinion is he thought he would never have such another chance of putting on speed on the public highway as long as he lived."

"I tink dat man went mad," remarked Herr Flütz solemnly. "I tink he thought he was driving flying machine, not motor."

"Thank God," remarked the Princess fervently, "you are safe. And now," she continued, turning to the Governor, "Fritz may come away with me, of course?"

The old gentleman shook his head.

"I much regret to say, your Royal Highness, he answered, smiling, "that I have no power to release him at present. This paper, written by his Majesty, though it is, is simply a reprieve. It merely orders me to stay the execution."

"But surely it is a pardon?" asked the Princess, the troubled look coming in her face once more.

Herr Flütz put up a large and grimy hand to stay the Governor's answer.

"Highness," he said reassuringly, "Home Secredary vill hear from de King ven de telegraphs is mended once more. Home Secredary vill hear something mos' disagreeable, I assure you. Home

## IN THE GOVERNOR'S ROOM

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Secredary, I tink, vill lose his siduation, and den — den you vill find dat der Herr Fritz vill be mos' vell cared for. Meanwhile," he continued with great solemnity, shaking his finger at them, "I gif' you varning, Herr Governor, and you Mister Shereef, you aushängen dis prisoner and it vill be war between your country and mine — war."

He bent and kissed the poor prisoner's hand.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE ROYAL COURT

TIME crept on and the dark short days of January gave place to the brighter ones of February, and they in turn to the lengthened sunlight but strengthened cold winds of March and April. Fritz Hoffmann had been removed to Parkhurst, where he remained lost to the public gaze, but by no means to the memory of the writers for the half-penny papers, who freely speculated on the reason for his being reprieved at the last moment. Of course the prevailing idea was that fresh evidence had been discovered which cast a grave doubt upon his guilt. The real facts, however, were that the Home Secretary, although fully acquainted by Frisner with the circumstances in connection with the dagger-sheath, yet did not feel fully justified in ordering Fritz's release until some more definite clue had been obtained. Meanwhile Fritz was being treated with the utmost leniency, wore his own clothes, and was regarded more like a guest of the Governor, in whose garden he was permitted to walk freely. All these indulgences had been se-

## THE ROYAL COURT

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cured to him by instructions from a very high quarter.

Ethel Boulger upon her release had immediately left England for Algiers, where she proposed to pass the winter with her brother and sister. She had been the recipient before her departure of a very handsome necklace of precious stones of an unusual size and brilliancy, presented to her by Hugh Featherstone.

It was about a week after the reprieve of Fritz that Inspector Frisner was sent for by the Home Secretary, whom he found in his room, with his great writing-table strewn with newspapers.

He came to the point, directly Frisner took the chair he motioned him to.

"I've been carefully over that fresh evidence you submitted to me, Frisner," he began, "and I have come to the conclusion that your department must make a great effort to sift the matter to the bottom with as little delay as possible. The papers are getting very annoying concerning Hoffmann's reprieve, and there is very little doubt we shall have fresh questions asked in the House about it. We have already had two. I have seen your chief, and I think you will find that special facilities will be given you in order that you may have your hands perfectly free in the matter. Another thing is that if Hoffmann is an innocent man, as I am beginning to believe he is" — the Secretary paused and gave a

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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little cough — “ why he ought to be set at liberty. I merely sent for you, Frisner, to impress upon you — knowing you to be a thoroughly trustworthy and energetic servant of the Crown — the urgency of unravelling this mystery with as little delay as possible.”

Frisner could only bow, and assure the Home Secretary that nothing should prevent his doing his very best to discover the real perpetrator of Sir John Boulger’s murder. He left the Minister satisfied that he would exert his fullest energies; but it was some time before his exertions bore fruit, and then the result came about in a most extraordinary manner.

The King and Queen held their first Court that year early in April. Like all such early functions of the season it was well attended, and crowded with *débutantes* and the newly married ladies of England, presented as a rule, with more or less satisfaction, according to their worldly possessions by their husband’s relatives.

“ The old throne room was one blaze of light, shining on a living bouquet of varied colours ever moving, among which the glittering precious stones shone like dewdrops, and the white dresses of the *débutantes* supplied the pure white blossoms.

Very large was the circle of royal princes and princesses that night attendant upon their Majesties, and in that group gathered round the throne,

## THE ROYAL COURT

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no princess attracted more attention, upon no one was more praise and admiration lavished by the great crowd of onlookers which thronged the room, than upon the Princess Marguerite de Valois.

Clothed in pure white, with one priceless necklace of pearls as her sole ornament, her jet black hair, grey eyes and sweet crimson lips set off to perfection by the dress she wore, she was as royal a little person from the tip of her perfectly coiffured tresses to the toes of her dainty shoes, as her native land had ever produced. Not that she was by any means unduly proud; on the contrary, her lips were continually parting in smiles and showing a set of the whitest teeth, but there was that about her which marked her unmistakably at a glance as a lady of royal blood, with whom it would be very dangerous to deal, should her dignity or sense of honour — which was very keen — be ever seriously offended.

She had been standing perhaps half-an-hour watching the continuous stream of presentations, that never-ending series of low curtseys; she had been chatting quietly to a lively Austrian princess on her right to whom she was related, when suddenly the smile left her lips, and her attention to her friend's conversation was gone. Her eyes were riveted on a lady who was just rising from a profound obeisance.

This was a lady very beautifully dressed, upon

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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whose fair bosom many a rich gem sparkled, but above all a great diamond, which in the flood of light shone yellow in its lustre.

She rose and passed on, calling forth many a suppressed cry of admiration at her beauty.

"But, dear Marguerite," said the Austrian princess softly, "you are not listening?"

Marguerite came close to her and gripped her arm.

"Do you see that lady there, just leaving the presence, with the great diamond on her breast?"

The Princess of Austria followed the direction of her gaze.

"Yes," she answered, "I see her, but you are making my arm black and blue."

"Do you know who she is?" asked Marguerite.

Her friend shrugged her shoulders. "I do not know her," she answered, "how should I?"

Marguerite's gaze followed this lady as she swept away, and the attendant page, picking up her train, threw it over her arm; then she was lost to her view.

But this was by no means the only attention she drew towards herself and the great diamond she wore.

An Indian prince, an aged man of great power and wealth, standing before the throne caught the glitter of the diamond as she turned, and signing to one of his attendant ministers, called his attention to it with many impatient directions and some infor-

## THE ROYAL COURT

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mation concerning it which the white-bearded minister received with awe.

That night, as that lady's carriage left the Palace, it was followed by a motor, in which an intelligent servant of the Indian prince sat; a keen, brown-faced man who did not take his eyes off the carriage he was following until it set its occupant down at her home.

The next morning Inspector Frisner upon his arrival at his office at Scotland Yard, was handed the following extraordinary telegram —

“I have seen the lady of my dream. Come to the Palace as soon as possible.—PRINCESS MARGUERITE.”

## CHAPTER XXIV

### DETECTIVE-SERGEANT SMART

INSPECTOR FRISNER stood with the telegram in his hand and pondered; he was pretty well at his wits' end with regard to the Queen's Gate murder, and the identity of the mysterious lady who dropped the dagger-sheath in the empty house, two doors from that of the late Sir John Boulger, was as unknown to him as the mountains of the moon.

Having exhausted every possible clue his active brain had suggested, he had come down that morning to Scotland Yard with the intention of spending a couple of hours in a good hard *think*. Now this telegram practically informed him that the mystery had been solved by means of a dream. The question which agitated his mind at the moment was this, was a responsible officer of the Criminal Investigation Department justified in attaching any importance to a young lady's dream? If so, how much?

He placed the telegram carefully on the table, and continued to ponder.

He knew full well that he would *have* to wait

## DETECTIVE-SERGEANT SMART

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upon the princess at St. James's Palace, and that with as little delay as possible; and that he would have to listen to the whole of her account of the matter, possibly at some length. This he had not the slightest objection to; staid officer though he was, listening to narratives told by pretty princesses was not by any means a usual part of a detective's curriculum, and he liked the exception exceedingly; besides something might come out of it. He took an old silk handkerchief out of a box and carefully wiped his tall hat with it until the nap shone to his satisfaction; then he reached a pair of new gloves from a drawer, settled his hair before a small looking-glass, and sallied forth into the bright spring air, to walk across St. James's Park to the Palace.

He was not kept waiting a moment. The princess expected him and he was shown straight into her boudoir as before; the room was bright with flowers, and the princess, pink and fresh from her cold bath in charming morning robe, rose from a chair as he entered.

"I thank you from my heart," she said effusively, "for coming at once. Now, Mr. Frisner, sit in that chair, and believe me, I have something to tell you which will *astonish you*."

Frisner, in a state of fascination and absolute subjection from the combined effects of the princess's bright eyes, red lips and pearl-white teeth —

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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which were very much in evidence — made a low bow and sat as he was bid.

"Now you remember, Mr. Frisner," continued the princess, "that the last time you were here I told you that I had had a remarkable dream in connection with the Queen's Gate murder?"

The detective respectfully inclined his head, as an indication that the dream was fresh in his memory.

"You will remember that I saw a woman holding the broken blood-stained dagger in her hand, and that her form and features were impressed very strongly on my memory. Well, at last night's Court, that very lady passed me and was presented to their Majesties!"

"You don't say so, your Royal Highness!" exclaimed the police officer, simulating a surprise he was far from feeling.

He was fully prepared for some such disclosure.

"Yes," continued Marguerite, "she passed close to me, and I noted her every feature."

"And her name?" mildly asked Frisner.

"Ah! that I cannot tell you. A friend of mine, one of the Austrian princesses, said she heard it announced by the Lord Chamberlain, but cannot now recollect it, as she is unused to English names."

Frisner coughed slightly; his belief in the value of the princess's dream, as likely to supply the missing link in the evidence, was less than ever.

## DETECTIVE-SERGEANT SMART

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"Now," proceeded the princess, "when you were here last you promised me that you would do all you could to help me. I ask you now to discover the identity of the lady who was presented last night, and to make every inquiry about her until you satisfy yourself that she could not possibly have committed the murder. Now remember that poor Fritz Hoffmann is still a prisoner, and will not be released until he is fully proved innocent."

The detective took out his note-book and opened it submissively.

"Will your Royal Highness kindly give me a full description of this lady's appearance?" he asked in reply, fountain pen in hand.

Marguerite considered.

"She was above the medium height," she proceeded, "and was dressed entirely in white; her figure was superb, and very symmetrically proportioned. She is without doubt a most beautiful woman."

The detective wondered as he wrote down these particulars, whether she could excel the princess herself, who standing with heightened colour and parted lips, was a figure poets might have raved about. As for painters longing to paint her, why Frisner knew that the best of them had painted her over and over again ever since she was a child, as the Royal Academy had testified year by year.

"She has very pretty brown curling hair," con-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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tinued Marguerite, "a perfectly clear complexion, and large blue-grey eyes; but there is still one thing above all others by which you ought to be able to identify her."

Frisner hesitated with his pen in the air.

"And that, your Royal Highness?" he added.

"She wore an immense yellow diamond on her breast, a diamond of such size that its value ought to be a household word among the jewellers. I heard many ladies speak of it and say that such a diamond was no doubt historical."

He made a careful note.

"And how was it set?" he asked.

"It was very curiously set; it appeared as far as I could see to form the body of an immense spider with emerald legs. What is called a 'money spider,' perhaps, and worn for luck."

"One more question," asked Frisner; "can you recollect the names of any of the ladies who were presented just before this one?"

The princess considered for a moment.

"Yes," she answered, "the last name I recollect hearing the Lord Chamberlain announce, before this lady came, was that of the Countess of Coleborough."

"The Countess of Coleborough," repeated Frisner, carefully writing down the name; "very well, your Royal Highness. I have little doubt now that

## DETECTIVE-SERGEANT SMART

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I can discover the identity of the lady who wore the big diamond at any rate."

"Clear complexion, large blue-grey eyes," meditated the detective as he walked back to Scotland Yard; "the very description old Mrs. Botting gave me."

Detective-Sergeant Reuben Smart stood in an attitude of respect before his superior officer, Inspector Frisner, but so shifted from one foot to another, in his anxiety to keep pace with the rapid working of the celebrated detective's brain, that the latter out of respect for his nervous system — very highly strung, as with most deep-thinking men and women — was perforce obliged, in defiance of discipline, to tell the sergeant to take a chair. Sergeant Smart was an exceedingly ornamental specimen of the detective force, originally a constable like most of the members of the department; he was tall, broad-shouldered and dark, possessing a pair of fine blue eyes, which with his coal-black moustache and fresh, clear complexion, were considered irresistible to the opposite sex.

For this reason he was almost always employed where a lady's maid or other female upper servant had to be dealt with. He was happily married to the widow of a deceased very affluent licensed victualler, who departing this life, left his relict, now

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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Mrs. Smart, a flourishing public-house in Pimlico, and various investments in small house property. Mrs. Smart, strange to say, although secretly worshipping her handsome husband, was by no means jealous of his influence over the opposite sex, and was even not above making use of it in her business, regarding him as a most attractive ornament to her bar on Sunday evenings, and altogether a by no means negligible asset in the concern generally.

Sergeant Smart being seated, Inspector Frisner proceeded with the conversation —

“ Now I have taken you fully into my confidence, Smart, over this matter, and we will just go through the facts again.

“ Firstly. About three weeks ago a certain illustrious lady sends for me and makes a communication concerning a lady who was presented at Court.

“ Secondly. After much trouble and inquiry, I think I have succeeded in tracing this lady, who turns out to be the wife of a celebrated lawyer, but beyond this I can discover nothing.

“ Thirdly. Being entirely unable to ascertain her whereabouts on the day of the murder of Sir John Boulger in July last, I detail you to get hold of the lady's maid, and by those means which have made you celebrated in the Force,” Smart smirked, “ endeavour to ascertain from her the required information. Now just tell me again what was the result ? ”

## DETECTIVE-SERGEANT SMART

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Smart coughed and put on his police court manner.

"Young person is French, sir," he proceeded, "name is Annette Lupin. After some difficulty, I was able to make her acquaintance through the butler, with whom I picked up a friendship at the Red Lion, Kensington, the 'ouse he uses; our acquaintance began over a glass, and through me givin' him a tip for the Two Thousand.

"Found Annette Lupin reserved at first, but after takin' her once or twice to a music hall she got communicative, one night coming from the Pav. after a couple of glasses of port wine. Said she hated her mistress and believed she was a devil. 'I 'ate her,' was her words, 'she is like snake. Ah! how I hate her beautiful, slippery body.'"

Sergeant Smart paused, as if in apology for the idiosyncrasies of the serving women of a foreign nation.

"Go on," commented Frisner, "what more did she say?"

"She said that the lady's husband was jealous of her and suspected her; but she believed she was too clever for him. The husband had often given her, Annette, a sovereign after making inquiries about her mistress, but she had very little to tell him because she did not know much. Her mistress was too close. She liked her master; he was a good man, and very free with his money, in fact, '*un*

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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*homme très gentil,'* and too good for that 'pig of a woman' her mistress. She had sent him an anonymous letter to warn him, having watched her mistress's little games."

Smart gave the French quotation with some finish, having picked up a fair knowledge of the language at a school in Belgium whither he had been sent in his youth by a well-to-do aunt. For that reason he had been on occasions exceedingly useful to Scotland Yard.

"That's all very well," commented Frisner, "but what did she say about the day of Sir John Boulger's murder, last July?"

"Well, I've been over that ground a goodish bit with her, sir," answered the sergeant, "until she was beginning to get a bit suspicious of me. But after reminding her she might be revenged on her mistress, and make a bit for herself into the bargain, she seemed to soften. I think it was the money tempted her. Those French maids are all alike. However, walking home from the Marrabone Music 'All last night, she promised to have a good think and try and recollect what happened that particular day. She says she has a good memory, but it wants rubbing up."

"What did she say about the diamond spider?"

"Up to the present, sir, she persists in saying that her mistress does not possess such a piece of jewellery, at any rate as far as she knows."

## **DETECTIVE-SERGEANT SMART**

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“Hum!” remarked the Inspector, meditatively.  
“I don’t think we are very far on the road yet,  
Smart; that German chauffeur has got to do a bit  
more time at Parkhurst, it appears to me.”

## CHAPTER XXV

### DOCTOR JELLALABAD

ABOUT a fortnight before the interview between Inspector Frisner and Sergeant Smart the inhabitants of Prince Albert Mansions, Kensington, received a shock in the accession of a new tenant to one of the upper flats. The tenant was no other than a learned native Indian doctor from Bombay; not an itinerant "doctor," by any means, but a real, downright LL.D., with the stamp of Oxford University upon him.

In appearance, Doctor Jellalabad was just what you might expect him to be; brown faced, white bearded and bespectacled, with a by no means unkindly look about the eyes. Thin, spare, almost emaciated, he certainly was, and his highly respectable black frock coat and grey trousers, well made though they were, hung about him as if his shape were one which utterly refused to lend itself to the arts of an English tailor.

But for his spotless turban he might almost have passed for one of those little dried-up professors; whose monkey-like features seem common to all nations.

Doctor Jellalabad was engaged in a great work

## DOCTOR JELLALABAD

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on England, intended to be of vast use and enlightenment to his countrymen, and for that purpose the doctor was spending the spring in London, and imbuing his new book with impressions of town life in the season.

Very courteous was the doctor when he met any of the other tenants of the Mansions on the stairs, almost invariably standing aside to let the "white sahibs" pass. So polite was he that many of the most exclusive people residing there began to take an interest in him after the first week, among them Mr. Beauclerk and his wife.

Very obsequious and deeply respectful was he to the latter; there seemed something about her blue eyes and sunny curls which fascinated him, especially when she was dressed for some great function in the evening, and would emerge from her flat to do down to her waiting motor, a dream of loveliness. Scarcely did she ever thus issue forth without meeting the little brown doctor either on the stairs or loitering about the Hall.

Sometimes she would find him buried deep in thought on these occasions, sitting huddled up on a large ottoman, near the porter's office.

Mrs. Beauclerk was the last person to allow attention to go unnoticed or unrewarded, even from a little brown Indian. She took to encouraging the little man as he stood cringing before her, evidently overcome by her beauty.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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She even on one occasion invited him into her flat, and let him sit in the drawing-room and talk to her about India and his impressions of England.

A very good talker was Doctor Jellalabad, and not at all abashed by his surroundings on that occasion; indeed, it appeared to her that he was "quite nice," and might make himself agreeable in any society. She told her husband so when he came home, and he laughed heartily about it, and advised her to "take him up" and bring him out as a lion.

The notice bestowed upon the learned little Indian was by no means confined to the ladies and gentlemen living at Prince Albert Mansions, their servants were equally attracted by him, and Annette Lupin, Mrs. Beauclerk's maid, was loud in his praises, declaring him to be "gentil" in the extreme, and possessed of manners equal to those of any of the gentlemen in the district of the Avenue des Ternes in Paris, in which flourishing thoroughfare her father kept a baker's establishment.

So a month passed, and little Doctor Jellalabad began to be accepted as one of the established facts of Prince Albert Mansions.

It was about the end of the month after he had arrived, when Hubert Beauclerk was away on circuit that Mrs. Beauclerk had a most curious dream; a dream that was to have extraordinary results.

## DOCTOR JELLALABAD

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She had retired to bed after quite a quiet evening, that is to say, she had only been to the theatre, and to supper at the Carlton afterwards, with one or two friends, gentlemen, of course. She didn't care much for ladies' society.

Annette had seen her safely in bed, and had left her provided with everything necessary for the night, including a little tea-set with a spirit-lamp by the bedside, and a little *carafou* of *fine champagne* should she feel faint, which she often did.

Sunk in the feathery depths of her luxurious bed she had apparently drifted into the softest of slumbers. That sweet sleep only vouchsafed to those fortunate persons who have their bills paid regularly for them — a very select class — or to that very much larger one composed of persons who have no consciences. Mona Beauclerk slept the blessed sleep of the woman who feels no compunction for her misdeeds, whose "*mea culpa*" only rises to her lips at a lost opportunity. She lay curled up, the soft luxury around her, no softer than her own beautiful, wicked body, cared for and pampered to the last degree; she lay like some beautiful animal, well fed and with passions gratified to satiety.

This sleep, calm and passive as she reckoned it afterwards to have been, was, however, broken in upon by a dream; and this was the dream —

It appeared to her that she was lying in her bed, just as she remembered to have been before she fell

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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asleep; the room was just as she had left it except for two things.

The first was that instead of being lighted by electricity it was pervaded by a subtle glow, which flooded every part of it, and brought out the minutest detail of even the smallest thing in it with great exactness.

The second thing was that the little Indian, Doctor Jellalabad, stood at the bed's foot.

He was not dressed as she had always seen him, in European custom; he wore the dress of a native of India; that is to say, he wore a long, perfectly white robe, which fell in not ungraceful folds from his shoulders, and a white turban.

It was something about this turban which attracted her; fixed in the front was an ornament composed of small yellow diamonds representing the sun in its glory, or it would have done so perhaps had it been complete; the centre, however, was missing; there was no sun.

The dark, sleepy-looking eyes of Doctor Jellalabad were fixed upon her as she lay, but she fancied as she gazed into them that fires gathered in their black depths; they seemed to fascinate her; she could not take hers from them.

Presently the lips moved, and he spoke to her; not in the soft, sibilant tones he used to her when they met at her coming in and going out, as they passed on the staircase, but in a tone of command.

## DOCTOR JELLALABAD

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“Where is the Sun Stone?” he asked.

She looked at him and wondered.

“The Sun Stone?” she repeated.

He pointed to the representation of the sun in his turban, and answered her.

“Two hundred and twenty-two years ago the Great Sun Stone was stolen from this emblem of office worn by the High Priest of the Temple of Surrâma. Two hundred and twenty-two years it has been in the possession of unbelievers. Where is it?”

Mona looked at the gathering fierceness in his eyes and trembled.

“I don’t know what you mean,” she answered, dropping her eyes.

“Liar!” he replied at once; “you wore it at the Court of the English King and Queen. Wretched woman, are you so guiltless that you can wear that sacred stone, vowed only to the use of those whose lives are free from the stain of sin, that they may serve Brahma the better? you who —”

She cried aloud pitifully, “Don’t say it! don’t say it! and I will answer what you wish, but I know nothing of the diamond.”

“Liar!” he repeated, “you will not tell me of your free will. I will oblige you to tell me, not only where the Sun Stone is concealed but also every secret of your past wicked life.”

As he spoke he left his station at the end of the

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

bed and slowly approached her, as he did so the light faded from the room, and his eyes appeared like two glowing orbs of fire in the gloom. He bent over her as she lay, and his eyes seemed to pierce her own, even to her very soul. She would have tried to call aloud, but her faculties seemed numbed and useless; she could only gaze into the fierce glaring eyes of the Indian.

Then when he seemed to be absorbing all her spiritual nature into his own, the room, his white figure, even the glowing eyes, slowly faded away, and merged into deep sleep.

Annette was standing by her bed with a little tea-set on a tray, and a dish of exquisite fruit. The light was streaming into the room through the open French windows.

"Madame sleeps late this morning," remarked the maid.

Mona turned in her bed and looked at the woman, her head seemed strangely light and confused. Then in a flash the recollection of the dream came upon her and she became feverishly anxious.

"Is Madame unwell this morning?" asked Annette.

For answer she angrily ordered the maid out of the room. The door had no sooner closed upon her when Mona sprang out of bed and locked it. Then she rushed to the bed again and took a small bunch of keys from under her pillow. With these

## DOCTOR JELLALABAD

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in her hand she went quickly to the mantelpiece and took down a small picture hanging over it. Then she commenced feeling over the surface of the silk damask with which the room was lined; presently she felt a small inequality, which she at once pressed, it flew open like the case of a watch and disclosed a small keyhole. In this she at once inserted one of the keys and turned it twice. Giving it a pull, the whole of that part of the pattern of the silk damask came out, revolving on hinges like the door of a cupboard, and behind it was a small iron safe.

Mounting on a chair, Mona inserted in this another key, and opened it; then searched feverishly in one of the drawers. She threw up her arms and gave a loud cry.

“Gone!” she almost shrieked. “Gone! I have been robbed!”

There came a hasty rapping at the door; her cry had been heard by her maid. She quickly closed and locked the safe, fastened the panel, and snapped back the little keyhole cover into its place, then she hung up the picture again, unlocked the door, and jumped back into bed, where, sitting up, she filled herself a full glass of brandy from the *carafou* on the table at the bedside, and drank it off.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE AUBURN WIG

MONA set down the brandy-glass as the maid entered. Annette gave one glance at her livid face, then went to the toilet-table and fetched a gold-mounted flask of *eau-de-Cologne*.

“But what is the matter with madame dis morning?” she asked solicitiously; “is she ill?”

For some moments Mona did not answer her; then she almost gasped —

“Go to the rooms of Doctor Jellalabad, the Indian doctor. Knock and inquire if he is there. Stay!” she added, as the maid turned a quick, apprehensive glance upon her. “Put me out that mauve dressing-robe, and I will go myself.”

In two minutes she was wrapped in this garment and her feet thrust into little slippers; then she opened the door and rushed up the staircase.

Doctor Jellalabad’s flat was two flights up; she ran up these without stopping, and arrived breathless at his door. Her repeated ringings were at last answered by an untidy-looking Swiss servant, half asleep.

## THE AUBURN WIG

---

“ I want to see Doctor Jellalabad,” she asked.

The man gave a look at her *deshabille*, then shrugged up his shoulders, and answered almost impertinently —

“ He has gone away.”

“ Gone away?”

“ Yes; he left very early this morning to catch a train.”

“ Do you know where he has gone to?”

“ No.”

“ Did he not leave an address?”

“ No.”

“ Then you are not going to follow him?”

The man shrugged his shoulders again.

“ Why should I follow him?” he asked. “ He has paid me off.” He opened the door and pointed to a little heap of money lying on the table of the entrance hall of the flat. “ Why should I follow him?” continued the man. “ He engage me by the week; he pay me. It is finished.”

Mona turned away from the man in disgust, and, reaching her own room again, sat on a chair by the open window and thought.

“ He has got my diamond,” she muttered to herself, “ and my only chance of getting it back is to call in the police.”

She paused and ground her white teeth.

“ Wretches!” she gasped. “ I hate them!”

She sat thinking some minutes and watching the

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

early riders in the distant park, then suddenly seemed to take a resolve.

"I will chance it!" she cried. "I *will* have my diamond back! I will chance it, whether Hubert finds out or not."

Then acting quickly, as if she feared her resolve would falter, she ran through the flat to the study, where the telephone was, and rang up Scotland Yard.

Inspector Frisner, entering his office that morning, was met by an energetic underling.

"A curious case came in this morning, sir," he said, "over the telephone. A lady at Kensington has lost a great yellow diamond, which she says has been stolen from her during the night."

"A great yellow diamond," repeated the detective mechanically, drawing off his gloves and feeling in his pockets for his note-book and fountain-pen.

He scarcely waited to take down the lady's address and compare it with one already in his note-book. Within three minutes he was in a hansom bowling along towards Kensington.

He took out his watch as he entered Prince Albert Mansions, and, talking to the hall porter about the robbery, compared it very carefully with a clock hanging in the entrance hall; it was a practice of his in all cases. The hall clock was five minutes slow. Then he went up to Mrs. Beauclerk's flat. At the door was a broad-shouldered, clean-shaven

## THE AUBURN WIG

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gentleman carrying a little brown hand-bag, and feeling in his pocket, evidently, for a latch-key.

"Do you want to see me?" he asked as Frisner came up. "I am Mr. Beauclerk."

Frisner, with professional caution, paused a moment or two before he answered. He knew perfectly well who Mr. Beauclerk was, but hesitated whether he would be justified in acquainting him with the object of his visit.

Ladies often have secrets about their jewels, and the etiquette of Scotland Yard is very strict concerning breaking confidences.

"My business is with Mrs. Beauclerk, sir," he answered. "She telephoned to my office."

Mr. Beauclerk looked at him quickly and suspiciously.

"May I ask your name?" he said.

The detective knew that it was useless to prevaricate further with him.

"I am Detective-Inspector Frisner, sir," he said, "of Scotland Yard."

Mr. Beauclerk found his key and unlocked the door.

"What on earth can my wife want with a detective from Scotland Yard?" he muttered.

He took Frisner to the study, and left him there, while, presumably, he sought to elucidate the mystery from his wife. He returned after about a quarter of an hour, looking depressed and puzzled.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

" My wife appears to have lost some jewellery of great value, and wants to see you," he said. " Will you kindly come with me?"

He took him to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Beauclerk awaited them, beautifully dressed, but white and agitated. Here Mr. Beauclerk left him and went out.

Frisner looked at the lady long and earnestly.

" I'm so glad you've come," began Mona in her sweetest tone. " I feel sure now that my diamond will be safe, Mr. — ?"

She looked towards him inquiringly for his name. Frisner took a card from his pocket and handed it to her.

" I am Inspector Frisner," he said, " of the Criminal Investigation Department."

Her face blanched a little more, and her hand slightly shook, as she took the card from him.

" Oh, yes," she answered, however, almost calmly, as if she knew him. " Inspector Frisner, of course."

" Now, madame," proceeded the detective after a pause, " will you kindly tell me the circumstance under which you lost your diamond?"

At some length, and with many divergences, according to the nature of women, she gave him an account of the coming of Doctor Jellalabad to Prince Albert Mansions; her slight acquaintance with him, her dream (which in his own mind he pooh-poohed),

## THE AUBURN WIG

---

the disappearance of the great yellow diamond, and the flight of the Indian.

"I am so glad I thought of sending for you so early, Mr. Frisner," she said, "because you will now be able to prevent him leaving the country."

The Inspector looked very dubious.

"I hope we may," he answered.

"But surely," she exclaimed in surprise, "a little brown Indian man like that could not go very far without causing remark."

"I should feel much more sure of capturing him, madame," Frisner answered, "if there were no such things as liners."

"Liners?"

"Lines of steamships, madame, plying to the East and elsewhere," he replied. "Probably by this time the little doctor has dyed his beard and eyebrows black, and has shipped on board a liner down at the East India Docks as a Lascar. He may be down the river by this time, or even out at sea."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Beauclerk in angry surprise, "and I thought you detectives were so clever."

Frisner shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"We cannot do impossibilities, madame," he replied, "but we will do all that is possible at the various ports. Now, will you kindly show me the safe from which the diamond was stolen?"

She hesitated for a moment.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"Is it absolutely necessary?" she asked.

"I fear it is, if you wish us to recover your diamond."

She led the way through the flat to her bedroom, already in perfect order again, and flooded with fresh air and light.

When she had closed the door, she discovered to Frisner the hiding-place behind the picture and the little iron safe in it.

"A very ingenious idea," he commented; "and this was known only to yourself?"

"Only to myself."

"You are sure?"

"Perfectly."

"Don't you think your maid may have gained an inkling of it?"

"I do not. Annette is a fool."

"Of course, madame," continued Frisner, working the door of the hiding-place backwards and forwards, "maids will listen at doors and look through keyholes."

"That may be, but mine has not got the brains to do it."

"Have you any objection to my seeing her presently?"

"Not in the least."

Before letting go his hold of the door of the hiding-place, Frisner was rude enough to take a look into the interior of the safe, out of the corner of his

## THE AUBURN WIG

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eye. He saw something there which greatly attracted his attention. It was a pale blue legal-looking paper, folded and stuffed away at the back of the safe. On it was some writing in the bold clear hand of a lawyer's clerk. He could only see a part of it, and that read as follows —

“The Marriage Settlement of Miss Matilda Greenwood and —” There the paper was folded down and he could read no more, although he thought he saw a large “S” as the commencement of the next name.

Mrs. Beauclerk closed the safe and hiding-place again, and they both returned to the drawing-room.

“Now perhaps you will let me see your maid?” suggested Frisner.

Annette was sent for and arrived white and rather indignant.

“Did you know this Indian doctor?” inquired Frisner, when she had given him her name, a quite unnecessary preceding, as he knew it already.

“Yes, I knew him,” she replied sulkily.

“And his Swiss servant; you knew him too?”

The Frenchwoman turned very red.

“Why do you ask me zese questions?” she demanded.

“Don't be offended,” replied Frisner, soothingly, “nobody suspects you.”

“Suspect me! It is impossible,” she replied hotly.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

" Yet you knew Doctor Jellalabad very well? "

" I knew him well."

" Yes, you went to the door to see him off? "

The maid went white to the lips.

" Who told you that? " she gasped.

" A little bird," vouchsafed the detective. Had he told the truth he would have said the hall porter.

" Hein! " commented the maid dubiously. " I do not understand your little bird. I went down-stairs wiz ze old doctor, because he said he was in hurry to catch train and his watch had stopped. I held his bag while he put his watch right by ze clock in ze hall."

" Poor man! " commented the detective, " if he went by that clock he lost his train. It's five minutes slow."

He took his leave of Mrs. Beauclerk, promising that the great machinery of Scotland Yard should be set in motion for the recovery of her great yellow diamond. But in his heart he had very grave doubts whether that splendid stone would ever be seen in England again. It looked to him like a well-devised plan to restore a sacred gem to its original resting-place in some remote Indian temple; such cases had occurred before. He had very little doubt but that the French maid was concerned in the robbery.

He had hardly reached his office in Scotland Yard again and sat down to his letters, when there

## THE AUBURN WIG

---

came a tap at the door and Sergeant Smart entered.

"I saw that French maid again last night, sir," he said, "and took her to the 'Pav.' She brought this with her in a bit of paper, and gave it to me after a little persuasion. She said she found it stuffed away in a cupboard behind some of her mistress's old dresses. She thinks Mrs. Beauclerk must have forgotten all about it."

He opened a small paper parcel, and producing a lady's auburn wig laid it on the table before Inspector Frisner.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### ETHEL MAKES A STATEMENT

"AND what does she say about the day of the murder," inquired Frisner presently; "the nineteenth of last July?"

"She distinctly remembers that her mistress was absent from home the whole day, sir," he replied; "she is quite sure about it, because it was the day of the month on which she was always paid, and Mrs. Beauclerk gave her a whole holiday. She went to the Crystal Palace with a friend."

The sergeant paused, and Frisner sat absorbed in thought, his hand resting on his writing-table.

"Do you wish me to obtain any more evidence from the French maid, sir?" asked Smart presently.

"No," replied the inspector, "but you had better keep in touch with her. I should not be surprised if she tried to bolt if the inquiry about this yellow diamond gets too hot."

Left to himself Owen Frisner took a large sheet of clean, white paper from a drawer in his writing-table and laid it before him; by its side he placed his open note-book. Then he commenced to trans-

## ETHEL MAKES A STATEMENT

---

fer the various incidents recorded in the book in connection with the Queen's Gate murder to the sheet of paper, in chronological order. It took him over an hour to get them arranged to his satisfaction, then he heaved a deep sigh, and carefully wiping the pen he had been writing with, replaced it in the tray. Taking the sheet of paper now almost covered with writing, he folded it and locked it away in a drawer, then leant back in his chair and gave another deep sigh.

"What on earth did she do it for?" he asked himself. "It seems to be an absolutely objectless crime."

He got up and walked about the room, his hands in his pockets, as his habit was when cogitating.

"It wasn't for money," he continued, talking aloud, "nor for jewels — for which a woman will generally sell her soul — because she got nothing by it. Nothing whatever was stolen. What on earth made her murder him?" He walked backwards and forwards and round his office without coming to any conclusion. Then he put on his hat and went out.

"I'll go over to Somerset House, and have another look at the certificate of her marriage with Mr. Beauclerk," he said.

He walked down the Embankment, and by some back streets up to the great mansion of Protector Somerset, now the depository of so much that is

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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interesting in the way of Births, Deaths and Marriages, not to speak of the Wills of the country preserved there.

He soon found himself in a well-lighted apartment, on the left of the entrance, which he knew very well from former visits, and in a few minutes was poring over the record of what he sought.

Yes, it was all in order: Hubert Spencer Beauclerk, King's Counsel, to Mona Everleigh Dawson, widow of Samson Dawson, merchant of Melbourne. She described herself as the daughter of the Rev. Septimus Greenwood, Clerk in Holy Orders, and Perpetual Curate of Riddleburn in Dorsetshire.

Frisner took a careful copy of this certificate in his note-book, blotted it, and put it in his pocket. He was walking out of the main entrance of Somerset House, after what looked like a fruitless search, when he came face to face with Hugh Featherstone, with whom he had become acquainted at the trial of Ethel.

"Inspector Frisner!" cried Hugh, as soon as he saw him, "you are the very man I want to see; I intended calling upon you this afternoon to ask you to do me a favour."

"And what is the favour, Mr. Featherstone?" asked the detective, smiling. He rather liked the sporting stockbroker; there was something refreshing and breezy about him.

"I want you to come up to Queen's Gate with

## ETHEL MAKES A STATEMENT

---

me," he answered, "and see Miss Ethel Boulger before she goes down to Cowes with her brother and sister. They have bought a yacht and intend keeping it there during the summer."

"Why do you want me to come?" asked Frisner.

"Miss Boulger," replied Featherstone, "has an important communication to make to you concerning the murder of her father."

Featherstone quickly noted the keen look of interest which came into the detective's face at his communication; like all stockbrokers he was used to making the most of an opportunity.

"Look here, inspector," he said, "come and have a bit of lunch with me at the Junior Carlton, then we can go up to Queen's Gate after."

The detective consulted his watch — a presentation from foreign royalty — then made up his mind.

"Thank you, Mr. Featherstone," he said; "your kind offer is such an inducement to me that I won't say no. At the present time any new bit of evidence in connection with Sir John Boulger's murder is particularly welcome to me."

They duly lunched at the Junior Carlton, then puffed away westward in Featherstone's motor-car, which had been summoned by telephone.

Hugh had taken the opportunity while at the club instrument to also warn Horace Boulger that he and Inspector Frisner intended paying them a visit. He was therefore not surprised on their arrival to find

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

Ethel and Horace awaiting them in the library. Ethel had been much restored by her trip to Algiers; but for a little anxious look about her eyes and a nervous working of her hands when the murder was referred to, she was now little the worse for the awful experiences through which she had passed. When they were all settled down comfortably Featherstone opened the subject of the murder.

"I mentioned to you this afternoon, Inspector Frisner," he began, "that Miss Ethel Boulger had a statement to make in connection with the murder of Sir John. I think it would be best perhaps if Miss Boulger made her statement in her own words, and then you could ask her any questions you wish, to elucidate any point that is not clear to you."

"Certainly, Mr. Featherstone," replied Frisner, taking out his note-book, with a bow to the lady. "I consider that a very good suggestion."

"The first point upon which Miss Boulger wishes to make a communication is naturally a very painful one, being connected with her late father. It concerns his acquaintance with a certain mysterious lady whom he used to meet in Kensington Gardens."

Frisner was all attention in a moment.

"I saw my late dear father altogether on three occasions with this lady," interposed Ethel; "twice in the Gardens, and once in a carriage crossing Regent's Park."

## ETHEL MAKES A STATEMENT

---

" You did not know the lady, Miss Boulger?" asked Frisner.

" No; she was a perfect stranger to me."

The detective noted down her remarks, then turned to her once more and asked a question.

" Now will you kindly describe this lady's appearance to me," he asked, " as accurately as you can?"

Ethel paused and thought before she answered him.

" She was tall," she began slowly, " very graceful, and always very beautifully dressed," this latter attribute, of course, was pre-eminent in Ethel's mind, as it naturally would be in that of any member of her charming sex.

The detective raised his eyes and waited anxiously for more details.

" She had a beautiful complexion," continued Ethel, " soft, curling brown hair, and beautiful blue-grey eyes."

Frisner dropped his fountain pen and had some difficulty in finding it, when he did he lost no time in taking a note of this last statement.

" Have you anything more to say about this lady, Miss Boulger?" asked the inspector.

She did not answer at once, but looked down at her nervously-working white hands lying in her lap.

" No," she answered; " I have nothing more to say about the lady except that she seemed on very bad terms with my father. He was talking to her

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

as if he had a very great disagreement with her. On two occasions he was very angry."

The detective nodded.

"There is one more matter I should like to refer to," continued Ethel, "and that is this—I don't think you are aware of it—on the day of my father's murder I went on to the leads at the top of the house, it being very hot, before I came down-stairs and saw Fritz Hoffmann, the chauffeur. When I left the leads I am perfectly certain I left the door leading on to the roof open. I mention this because Mr. Featherstone's theory is that some one came through the roof and killed Sir John."

Frisner took a careful note of what she said, then turned to her with a puzzled look on his face.

"Pardon me, Miss Boulger," he said, "but you mentioned that you saw Fritz Hoffmann when you came down-stairs. Where did you see him?"

"I came down," she answered, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, "into the front drawing-room and looked at my father through the curtains. I intended speaking to him and asking his pardon, but he had already thrown his handkerchief over his face, and appeared to be asleep. While I stood there looking at him I saw Fritz Hoffmann come up the stairs softly, take his cap, which he had left lying on a chair on the landing, and go down again."

"Do you think he saw you?" asked Frisner.

"Yes, I am sure he did," she answered; "his eyes

## ETHEL MAKES A STATEMENT

---

met mine and he half smiled, but he did not speak."

"Then that explains something of a most extraordinary nature," cried the detective, quite excitedly. "I have been repeatedly told that Hoffmann was sacrificing his life to save you, and I could never tell why. Now I see plainly why he would not speak. He suspected you, Miss Boulger, and was afraid of incriminating you."

Ethel threw up her hands and gave a little cry.

"He suspected you quite erroneously," continued Frisner, "of course, but the brave fellow was evidently prepared, nevertheless, to sacrifice his life for you."

"If that is really the fact," broke in Horace Boulger, "the man must be a perfect hero."

"That I believe him to be," responded the inspector, "and a hero of a very rare kind."

Ethel Boulger had broken down and buried her face in her hands.

"Why should he sacrifice his life for me?" she sobbed.

Frisner looked at her a moment; then smiled at the other two men.

"The answer to that question, Miss Boulger," he answered, "I think is very obvious. But you need shed no tears for him. I have every reason to believe that within a week he will be a free man."

"Then this shall be the first house to receive him," cried Horace Boulger.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"And mine next," added Featherstone; "he shall be my chauffeur again if he likes."

"I don't think you could entertain a worthier guest," added the detective feelingly.

"Noble fellow!" sobbed Ethel.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### AN ABSURD PROPOSAL

INSPECTOR FRISNER's forecast with respect to Fritz Hoffmann was perfectly correct; within a week of the interview at Queen's Gate he was a free man.

Frisner had been enabled to place new evidence of such a character before the Home Secretary that that minister had felt justified in ordering Fritz's immediate release.

Horace Boulger and his two sisters were by that time duly installed on their new yacht *The Water Lily*, at Cowes, and Horace being apprised by Featherstone of the approaching liberation of the man they now all looked upon as a hero, Fritz, upon emerging from the prison at Parkhurst, was surprised to find a smart motor-car waiting for him, and in it his two former masters, Mr. Horace Boulger, and Hugh Featherstone.

"Now, my dear Hoffmann," cried the latter, seizing his hand and wringing it, "Mr. Boulger and I have come to bear you away to his yacht. He wishes you to stay with him until you have quite

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

recovered from the effects of these terrible proceedings."

Fritz smiled and involuntarily put his hand to his head. His hair had turned grey at the temples.

"Yes, you must come," added Horace; "my sisters particularly wish to thank you for your very chivalrous conduct. I presume you have no other plans?"

"No," replied Fritz rather sadly; "I have neither plans nor friends. It is very kind of you."

They got into the motor-car and were whirled away to the landing-stage at Cowes. Here they found a smart motor-launch awaiting them, and in a few minutes were ascending the accommodation ladder of the five hundred ton steam yacht *Water Lily*. The first persons to meet them on board were the two sisters, Zara and Ethel Boulger, the latter, without referring directly to the trial, took both Fritz's hands in hers, and with a sweet look in her eyes which expressed volumes, thanked him for "his goodness to her."

Fritz, in his old-time German way, could only bend and kiss her hand, and say nothing.

On that beautiful yacht, steaming round the Isle of Wight and down Channel as far as Torquay, in the most perfect weather, Fritz Hoffmann spent three delicious weeks in the society of the girl he loved.

On board he was treated as an honoured guest; it

## AN ABSURD PROPOSAL

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was taken for granted that he was a gentleman, or at any rate, a person of refinement, who for some reason had been compelled to earn his living by driving a motor-car. It was only once during the visit that this subject was referred to, and then Fritz introduced it.

Hugh Featherstone was leaving the yacht one Monday morning to return to town — he usually spent his week ends on the *Water Lily* — when Fritz took him aside and asked him a question.

"Are you suited with a chauffeur, Mr. Featherstone?" he asked.

Hugh burst out laughing.

"No, I'm not," he answered; "I wish I had you back again; but I suppose you will be accepting that appointment Mr. Boulger has got for you in the city?"

Fritz looked dubious.

"I'd very much rather drive you," he answered; "I'm no good for office work, but I don't like to tell Mr. Boulger so."

Hugh considered for a moment.

"Well," he said at last, "if you would *really* like the job, you shall have it; I don't want a better nor a more careful chauffeur than you are."

"Thank you," replied Fritz, "you will find I shall be quite the respectful chauffeur again when I return to you."

Hugh laughed and slapped him on the back.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"Don't talk like that, my dear chap," he said; "we shall always be *friends* and companions I hope."

Very different to Fritz was the life on that splendid yacht to the monotony of Parkhurst prison, although it had been made pretty easy for him during the latter part of his stay.

In daily intercourse with Ethel Boulger he felt like a soul liberated from purgatory. Zara, too, was kind and sympathetic, and left the two very much to themselves.

It was one beautiful evening towards the end of the third week of his stay, when the yacht under easy steam was returning to her moorings from a delicious run to Weymouth, as the setting sun was sending its last rays on the white cliffs of the Needles, and the steady waves of the in-driving tide looked purple in the gathering gloom, that Ethel and Fritz sat in two deck chairs watching the beautiful scene.

It was just after dinner. Horace Boulger and his sister Zara still lingered in the luxurious deck-house, where the pink-shaded candles shed a rosy glow over the well-appointed table with its glittering silver and piled up luscious fruit.

Sitting side by side in the soft afterglow of the departed sun, Fritz's hand sought Ethel's, and finding it, held it. In that moment he thought that the summit of life's happiness had been reached; it

## AN ABSURD PROPOSAL

---

seemed to him there could not be greater happiness than that, for he believed that she loved him. Perhaps she did, in a way according with her nature. Who shall say? They sat thus for some minutes and then Fritz turned his head towards her, speaking in a low, earnest voice to which his slight German accent, so slight as to be almost imperceptible, lent a tone of pleasant emphasis very charming to the ear.

"I think you know, Ethel," he said — they had called each other by their Christian names after the first week on the yacht; "I think I have told you that I haven't always been obliged to earn my living by driving a motor. I have respectable connections abroad."

"Yes, Fritz," she answered, then fell to considering what manner of "respectable connections" these were. She remembered that her father had had a young German in his business in Oxford Street who had "respectable connections"; and once when she and Sir John were in Gottenberg, the German town the young man came from, they went to see his father and the rest of the "respectable connections." They kept a small hotel, she remembered, with a long *Salle à Manger*, with many windows looking on the street, shrouded in pleated muslin curtains. The place smelt of beer, and the father waited on the customers. She wondered whether Fritz's "respectable connections" were like these.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"It might even happen," continued Fritz slowly, his eyes on the soft red glow in the sky, "it might even happen, if I returned to my country, that I should occupy an official position there." He finished abruptly, his eyes still on the afterglow as if he were considering what he had just said.

Ethel shifted in her chair and drew the cloak she was wearing closely round her.

"He evidently aspires to be Burgomaster," was her mental comment on his last remark; "that is generally the summit of a German innkeeper's ambition."

"Ethel!" exclaimed Fritz suddenly, turning towards her and holding her hand very hard, "I have it in my mind to go back to my country and accept a position which has been offered me there; it is a good position, but for that you must trust me."

Ethel heard his words, with an amused smile, and pictured the "good position" as possibly that of hotel manager in an establishment similar to the one she had visited with her father at Gottenberg. She would have stopped him, for she felt instinctively what was coming, but his earnest voice prevented her before she could open her lips.

"If I accept this position, Ethel dear," he continued very tenderly, "and then come back to England and ask you to be my wife, will you marry me? You know I love you very dearly."

It had come at last, the very avowal which she

## AN ABSURD PROPOSAL

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had been doing her best to stave off for the last fortnight!

It had been very pleasant, this dallying with the handsome young foreigner — though there was very little foreign about him either in speech, dress or manner — it had all been very nice, and the beautiful weather had helped it.

Fritz's clean-cut features, dark hair, and splendid eyes, had pleased her more than she was prepared to admit, but she had fully analyzed her feelings over a fortnight ago, and had communicated the result to Zara when she had reasoned with her on encouraging Fritz too much. She had, as she expressed it to her sister, "as much intention of marrying Fritz as of marrying the man in the moon."

She admitted to herself, however, that had his position been different, say as good as Hugh Featherstone's, she would have preferred him to the latter, but as things stood she was as good as engaged to Hugh, and her brother and sister both knew it. There was only one point which gave her any uneasiness in her mind, and that was this rumour that he had at the trial been ready to foolishly sacrifice his life to save hers. But, after all, this might be a mistake; he had never said anything about it, or, in fact, referred to it in any shape or form. It might be a delusion of the detective Frisner.

The proposal having come, however, against her will she had to brace herself to deal with it, with the

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

thought, as she consoled herself, that she was acting for the happiness of both. Fancy her as the wife of a manager in a foreign hotel! No doubt she would be expected to keep the books. The idea was absurd!

She relinquished Fritz's hand and turned towards him.

"Fritz," she began, with an assumption of solemnity, "I am going to speak to you very seriously."

Already the ring in her voice caused his face to harden and the colour to leave it.

He made no answer, but hung upon her words with greater fear than that with which he had listened to the judge's dread sentence of death.

"Do not think," proceeded Ethel, "that I do not highly appreciate the honour you are doing me,"—this was a set form of words she had seen and admired in a *Complete Letter Writer*—"were our positions different, more equal, in fact—"

"Our positions!" repeated Fritz in a dazed manner.

"I repeat, Fritz," she continued, "that if our positions were equal my answer would be different; but before I give it I want you to listen to me for a few minutes. Now, just look at me."

He had been doing so for the best part of the last three weeks, but he did as she bid him. He saw before him a very pretty girl in a cream dinner-dress, over which had been thrown a heavy dark

## AN ABSURD PROPOSAL

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blue plush mantle, which greatly heightened the effect; but in her eyes he saw no love-light, and that was all he sought.

" You know," proceeded Ethel, " that I have been brought up expensively, surrounded with every luxury?"

He nodded.

" Do you think that I should be happy in an inferior position?"

" No," he answered quickly; " I had no intention of offering you one."

She paused and drew her mantle around her again with rather a queenly air. The man had offended her. He must be an idiot, she thought, to compare her position with that of the wife of an hotel-keeper.

" And yet you would ask me," she continued icily, " to give up much for you — to make sacrifices?"

He hesitated a moment before he answered.

" I am ready to sacrifice *much* for you," he said presently.

Her face changed at once.

" I will not pretend to misunderstand you, Fritz," she said in a much softened voice. " You refer to your heroic conduct at the trial."

" No, no, no!" he answered quickly. " I had no such thought in my mind. I meant something quite different."

She waved his reply aside.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"I believe, and so do others, that you refused to speak at the trial because you considered me guilty, and thought you would incriminate me if you cleared yourself. Tell me, is that so?"

"Do you insist upon my answer?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then I answer that it is true. I was willing to give my life for you, and am willing to give it still."

She put out her hand and pressed his; he took it in his own and kissed it.

"You are a very brave man," she said, "and I am not worth it. But why did you still continue to love me, if you thought me guilty?"

"I love you very deeply," he answered. "My love conquered even that, and made excuses for you."

"Do you still believe that I am guilty?" she asked, her lips trembling. "Do you still believe that I murdered my father?"

"No," he answered; "I do not believe it. I believe you to be as innocent as an angel. Oh! Ethel," he cried piteously, "be kind to me. I love you so dearly. Be my wife!"

"Now be sensible, Fritz," she said, laying her hand on his and trying to calm his agitation. "Consider one thing. Remember I have property. You would not like to live on my money."

"No, no, no!" he answered excitedly. "I had no such intention. We would live on mine."

## AN ABSURD PROPOSAL

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"Then what would become of my income?" she asked frigidly.

He considered for a moment, as if at a loss for an answer.

"We would save it for the children," he suggested desperately, at last.

A blush mounted to her cheek.

"Thank you," she answered haughtily. She rose from her seat, drawing the blue mantle around her. "No, Fritz," she continued decisively, "for many reasons, it cannot be."

"You will not marry me?"

"I cannot. But I tell you, for your consolation, that if your position were equal to mine, I would marry you in preference to any other."

"Ah! think again, Ethel," he implored, "before you send me away broken-hearted."

She held out her hand with a big diamond ring on it.

"Look there, Fritz," she said. "I have accepted that ring from Hugh Featherstone and I am as good as engaged to him."

Fritz rose, and going to the rail of the yacht, leant over and gazed at the purple waves. All the light seemed gone out of the sky.

"My master!" he murmured.

She was beside him, with her hand on his arm.

"Yes, your master," she repeated with a little laugh. "I am sure you see the absurdity of it all.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

I *must* marry a man who can give me a position. Mr. Featherstone is a rich stockbroker, remember, and likely to be on the Committee of the Stock Exchange. Surely you must see the absurdity of the thing?"

Fritz gazed dejectedly at the purple waves as the yacht's prow cleft them.

"Yes," he murmured to himself, "I see the absurdity, now."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### WHAT SOMERSET HOUSE REVEALED

ONE morning, about a month after Fritz's release, Inspector Frisner sat in his office in a brown study, a by no means unusual frame of mind with him at that time.

"The total absence of motive," he muttered, "that is the weak point. The whole case might break down if we could not show the motive."

He took out his note-book and laid it before him.

"I wonder," he said as he ran over, for the hundredth time, that portion devoted to the Queen's Gate murder—"I wonder how long Sir John Boulger was a widower, and when he married for the second time?"

He sat meditating for some minutes, then started up from his chair.

"I'll go and look at that certificate of the second marriage!" he exclaimed. "It's about the only document at Somerset House connected with this affair I have not overhauled. It never does to leave a stone unturned, and evidence comes from the most unlikely quarters. Indeed, a wonderful mine of

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

information to us poor detectives is Somerset House."

He had put on his hat, and taken a well-rolled umbrella from the stand, when there came a knock at the door, which was at once opened; a great sound of puffing and blowing became audible, the next moment the large face, and round spectacles of Herr Flütz became visible.

"Ach! Herr Inspector," he said breathlessly, "but you haf liberate him!"

"Good-morning, Herr Flütz," responded Frisner, putting forward a chair, "very glad to see you. What did you remark just now?"

"I haf said," repeated the Herr, "dat you have liberate him. Vy did you liberate him? Ach!" he added sinking into the chair, "but your stairs is terrible."

"Whom have we liberated?" asked Frisner.

"*Ach! Himmel!*" responded Flütz, "but you are difficult to make understand to-day. You have liberate Fritz Hoffmann."

"Certainly," responded Frisner, "he was liberated a month ago by the order of the Home Secretary."

"Den Home Secredary," replied Flütz promptly, "is tam fool. Home Secredary do not know his pizness."

"You had better go and tell him so," laughed Frisner, "it would be more than my place is worth.

## WHAT SOMERSET HOUSE REVEALED

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But why on earth should he not liberate Fritz Hoffmann; I thought you were so anxious that justice should be done him?"

The foreigner shook his fat head, lifted his forefinger and waggled it, then pulled out his cigar-case and handed it to Frisner.

" You do not understand ze situation, Herr Inspector," he replied. " It is like dis. Die King's brother, the Grand Duke of Brenberg, is dead."

" I know it," replied Frisner, " your royal family seems to be dying off very quickly."

" It vill die off more quicklier," he answered, " if ve do not dake care. The anarchists are very pizzy in Atavia at ze present time, ve haf some Italian refugees dere. Dey are planning de very tevvel and haf a bomb factory. I know for an absolute certainty dat dey are over here in London very much on pizness."

Frisner looked at him for some moments in surprise.

" What on earth," he asked, " has all this got to do with Fritz Hoffmann, the chauffeur?"

" Neffer mind vat it has to do mit Hoffmann the chauffeur," said Flütz. " Hoffmann the chauffeur vould haf been much better in Parkhurst for de present."

" Look here, Herr Flütz," said Frisner after a few moments' consideration, " what do you take such an interest in Hoffmann for?"

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"I shall not tell you."

"I think I can venture a guess," replied Frisner slowly, a look of intelligence breaking over his face, "only it seems too preposterous!"

Flütz puffed meditatively at his big cigar, then took it out of his mouth.

"Dake some goot advice, Herr Inspector," he said, glaring through his round spectacles. "I should never guess nodding, Herr Inspector, if I was you, especially," he added, "ven it is bres-  
bosterous."

"Then you will tell me nothing?" demanded Frisner.

"Do you see any greens in my eye?" asked Herr Flütz, with a knowing wink; "you do not catch old birds mitt chaff on his tail."

He indulged in an enjoyable chuckle, which he checked abruptly as if recollecting his official position.

"It is like dis, my dear frent," he proceeded in a conciliating tone. "*I cannot* tell you. I haf my orders from my minister. I must obey dem."

"Very well, Herr Flütz," replied Frisner, good-humouredly, striking a light and taking a puff at the Herr's big cigar. "I won't pry into your official secrets."

"I know you are a good fellow, Herr Inspector," the other replied, "and vill not dake offence. But I

## WHAT SOMERSET HOUSE REVEALED

---

vill ask you if dat I should want some of dese tam anarchists watched in London, you vill do it?"

"I am quite certain," replied the Englishman, "that our department will do anything to oblige your Government."

"Den I am satisfied," responded Flütz with a sigh, "and I go mit a light heart."

The two went down the stairs together and separated at the corner — Flütz to go to his Embassy for telegrams and Frisner to turn his steps towards Somerset House to inspect the marriage entry of Sir John Boulger when he took to himself a wife for the second time.

It was past one when he reached the old cool looking building and turned into the Search Room of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Department. The room was almost empty, and he filled in a form and paid his shilling without having to wait a moment. An energetic assistant (a kind of porter) who knew him, took the form and went off with it smiling; they were always ready to aid the Criminal Investigation Department at Somerset House; their researches gave a piquancy to an otherwise monotonous routine.

Meanwhile, Frisner sat on an old leather seat and amused himself with mental speculations. In about ten minutes the official came back with an even broader smile on his face.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"This is rather a rum go, Mr. Frisner," he said, giving an enjoyable snigger; "was there *two* Sir John Boulgers?"

"Not that I am aware of," answered the detective, "I never heard of any other."

"Then this gent," continued the man, throwing down the two heavy books he was carrying on a desk, "this gent has been and gone and got married twice in one year. Look here!"

He opened the two books at places already marked with slips of paper, and pointed to two entries, one in each.

The first was a record transmitted from the British Embassy in Paris, and bore testimony to the marriage of Sir John Boulger, Knight, with Matilda Greenwood, Spinster.

The entry in the other book was dated nine months after, and established the marriage at St. George's, Hanover Square, of Sir John Boulger, Knight, with Laura Standish Skeffington, daughter of the Honourable Ronald Skeffington.

Frisner stood with a hand on each book, and his eyes wandered from one entry to the other, while he screwed his mouth up into an impossible buttonhole.

"Rum go," repeated the humble official encouragingly, the smile still upon his face, and a look of expectation in his eye at possible enlightenment. "Don't often see a thing like that."

The detective answered him never a word, but

## WHAT SOMERSET HOUSE REVEALED

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slowly taking that inseparable companion, his note-book, from his breast-pocket, and a fountain pen from the watch-pocket of his waistcoat, began to copy the marriage entries into it. This done to his satisfaction, he put the note-book and pen back again, and feeling in his trousers-pocket produced half-a-crown which he pressed into the assistant's hand.

Then taking up his neatly-rolled umbrella, he departed out of the door without even so much as venturing a remark to the expectant attendant on the state of the weather. Only once did he pause on the doorstep to murmur to himself in a surprised voice: "The coolest hand I ever came across; he committed barefaced bigamy."

Inspector Frisner from choice seldom or never entered refreshment bars, alcohol interfered with his thinking, neither did he ever take much luncheon. His haven of recuperation was usually a tea-shop. To one of these, of the A B C variety, he now bent his steps, and found himself a seat at an empty table in a remote corner. In a minute or two he was confronted by a fresh-coloured girl in black, who expressed a desire to be acquainted with his wants. These proved to be exceedingly simple and inexpensive.

"Bring me," he said, "a large pot of tea, some cut bread and butter, and a double portion of raspberry jam."

## CHAPTER XXX

### IN PARIS

INSPECTOR FRISNER's simple but cloying meal being dispatched — he had ordered a second double portion of jam — he pushed away the sticky plate and produced his note-book.

"Now," he soliloquized, "the first thing will be to discover the antecedents of Matilda Greenwood. Where shall I start?"

He considered for a few moments; then came to a sudden determination.

"Boulger's shop, of course," he muttered to himself. "Some of the old hands may know something about her."

Within a few minutes he had paid his modest bill, tipped the attendant, and was in a hansom on his way to Oxford Street. Being deposited at the principal door of that magnificent establishment designated "Boulger's Limited," he dismissed his cab, and being already familiar with the ways of the place, sought that portion of the range of buildings devoted to the offices of the direction. Here he inquired for Mr. McCullock, the general manager, and was presently received by that bald-headed,

## IN PARIS

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sandy-whiskered gentleman in his private office, to whom he disclosed the fact that he was a detective from Scotland Yard.

When Mr. McCulloch had somewhat recovered from this surprising avowal, Frisner proceeded to ask a few questions of him.

"I have called, Mr. McCulloch," he began, "to ask you whether you can give me any information concerning a person of the name of Greenwood?"

Mr. McCulloch leant back in his chair, put his fingers together, and looked up at the ceiling in a profound fit of recollection.

"Greenwood?" he repeated. "Greenwood? Greenwood?"

The name seemed to be awakening long dormant memories.

"Yes," he said after a pause, "I recollect the name. We had an employé named Greenwood. Of course, you must understand, Mr. Frisner, that we find work here for some hundreds of people, and it is very difficult to recollect a name unless there is something connected with the person it belongs to, to recall it to one's memory. Now who might this person be?"

"The person I want," replied the inspector, "was a Miss Greenwood."

"That's it!" exclaimed Mr. McCulloch at once, "Miss Greenwood, of course! She was in the mantles. Now I'll just call the manager of that de-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

partment, who has been with the firm some years, and I have no doubt he will tell us all about her."

He took the telephone receiver standing on the table off its rest, and rang up the mantle department, requesting the presence of its head immediately.

In a few minutes there appeared a Frenchified little man, with the decidedly English name of Simpson.

"Do you recollect a Miss Greenwood in your department, Mr. Simpson?" the senior asked; "this gentleman is making inquiries about her?"

"Do I recollect Miss Greenwood, sir!" responded Mr. Simpson, with a most decided cockney accent, "I should think I do. She was the best show-woman we ever had, and that's saying a lot! Well connected too, I believe; daughter of a parson down in the West Country."

"Will you kindly tell me when she lived here?" inquired Frisner, producing his note-book, "and whether you know where she is now?"

"Let me see," considered Simpson, "she left here about six years ago. Rumoured she was going on the stage. She had a very fine figure, sir, had Miss Greenwood, a very fine figure indeed. No," he concluded, "I haven't the least idea where she is now."

"Can you tell me her Christian name?" inquired Frisner.

## IN PARIS

---

"*That I can't tell you, sir, I'm sorry to say,*" he answered.

"We can find that out from the wages book, I have no doubt," suggested Mr. McCullock. "I'll ring up the cashier's office."

"Can you tell me the Christian name of a Miss Greenwood who was in the mantle department about six years ago?" he inquired.

There was a long wait, and then came the answer, which he repeated —

"Matilda."

"Thank you, sir," replied Frisner, "I won't detain you any further."

The manager of the mantle department had already left the room, but Frisner found him waiting outside the office when he left:

"Beg pardon," began Mr. Simpson, "but there's one thing I want to tell you on the quiet. I didn't want Mr. McCullock to hear it. This is what it is:

"About six months after Miss Greenwood left the 'ouse, I happened to be at the Gaiety theatre with my wife; in the pit. Now Mrs. Simpson was in the 'ouse; we were both in the mantles together, I married her from it while Miss Greenwood was there. She gave us a present — a china teapot — so neither of us would be likely to be mistaken that night in what we saw at the theatre.

"When the curtain had been up some time, there

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

came into one of the big private boxes near the stage, our late head, Sir John Boulger, and who do you think was with him? Why, Miss Greenwood!

"*Surprised!* My missus and me could hardly keep in our seats! Sir John, he got behind one of the curtains of the box, but it was no good, we'd seen him fair and full and could swear to him out of a thousand, seeing him as we did every day of our lives. Miss Greenwood she was dressed something perfect, with diamonds sparkling all over her. Never thought she could look so beautiful, although she was a very pretty girl when she was with us, with her large bluish-grey eyes and chestnut 'air."

"Do you think," inquired Inspector Frisner, feeling in his pocket, "that you could recognize her portrait if you saw it?"

"Rather!" replied Mr. Simpson; "you show me one and I'll tell you if it's her in two ticks."

Frisner produced from his letter-case a slip cut from the *Lady's Pictorial*. It was the photograph of a lady presented at a recent "Court," and reproduced in that paper. Frisner held it before the mantle manager's eyes.

"That's her!" the little man cried at once, clapping his hands, "I'd know her anywhere; but My! ain't she a swell!"

Frisner sat in his office that afternoon with an open railway time table and a copy of the certificate

## IN PARIS

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of Sir John Boulger's marriage to Miss Greenwood before him.

"Paris," he murmured, "Paris, that's the next step. Hôtel du Prince, Boulevard des Italiens, is the hotel Sir John Boulger stayed at the time of his marriage, evidently, as that is the address given on the certificate, and the Hôtel Aurora the address of the lady, just opposite, if I am not mistaken. Well, we shall see," he remarked, folding up the certificate; "I shall go over by the night mail."

The next morning found Inspector Frisner sitting in the private room of the manager of the Hôtel du Prince, Boulevard des Italiens, Paris.

"Do I recollect Mr. Boulger?" exclaimed the amiable Frenchman, who despite his close-cropped hair *en brosse*, and curled moustache, spoke English as if he had been born in Whitechapel. "Certainly I do. We're not likely to forget him, and his wedding." The manager leaned back, and showing a set of white teeth, laughed heartily.

"What was there of an extraordinary nature about his wedding?" queried Frisner, glad that they had come to the point so soon.

"Oh, it was very *drôle!*!" continued the Frenchman; "they came together to Paris. He put up here, and she stayed over the way at the Aurora, the proprietor of which is a friend of mine.

"All day long old Mr. Boulger would be running backwards and forwards between here and the Au-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

rora, taking flowers, and fruit and everything he could think of for his intended. Ah! but she was a fine woman!" exclaimed the ardent Frenchman admiringly, "she had the fine figure and beautiful blue eyes and brown curly hair."

The manager sighed at the recollection.

"Stay a moment," said Frisner, "are you quite sure it was 'Mr.' Boulger you are speaking of?"

"Certainement!" replied the manager, "what else? You can see it in the book of arrivals. 'Mr. John Boulger, Merchant, Cheapside, London.' "

"Thank you," replied Frisner, making a note in his book, "I should like to hear some more about the wedding. He evidently dropped his title over here," he added to himself.

"Oh! the wedding, of course," proceeded the Frenchman. "They were married at the Embassy about three weeks after they came, and there was a superb wedding breakfast, with a big cake. *Here*, and all to themselves in a private room! Then they went on the honeycomb to Venice." The manager laughed heartily once more. "Now comes the funny part," he continued; "in less than a week they were back again. *He* here. *She* over the way at the Aurora. It was a sight the most screamingly funny," proceeded the Frenchman in a high key, "to see that old Mr. Boulger going over to the Aurora all day, and trying to persuade his wife to come over here and live with him! She would have

## IN PARIS

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nothing to do with him! My friend, the proprietor of the Aurora, told me that the rows there in her private room were terrible. But no, nothing would persuade her to come and live over here. Things got so bad over there that my friend thought he would have to ask her to leave. He himself had seen Madame Boulger threaten her old husband with one of those crystal Venetian daggers which she had bought in Italy on her honey-comb!"

Frisner started.

"Is your friend still the proprietor of the Hôtel Aurora?" he asked anxiously.

"Certainement!" replied the other, "he is doing very well over there, and will I think make his fortune."

"Well, how did the newly-married couple settle matters?" asked the detective.

"In the end," continued the manager, "by the advice of my friend, they sent for the English lawyer out of the Rue de la Paix, and he made peace between them, and they separated."

"They separated!"

"Yes; Mr. Boulger went back to England, and his wife went on to Switzerland."

"Will you kindly give me the name of the English lawyer in the Rue de la Paix?" asked Frisner.

"Certainement! it is Mr. George Robinson, just at the corner of the Boulevard."

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"Thank you," said Frisner; "now there is just one question more I want to ask you. Do you recognize these pictures?" He laid the newspaper cutting he had produced to Mr. Simpson, and a photograph on the table before him.

"Yes," replied the manager, pointing to the photo, "that is Mr. Boulger, and that," he added, kissing his fingers gallantly towards it, "is madame, his beautiful naughty wife."

The cutting represented Mrs. Hubert Beauclerk in her Court dress.

## CHAPER XXXI

### THE BUNDLE OF LETTERS

FRISNER went straight to the English lawyer in the Rue de la Paix, and after producing his credentials, asked him whether, about six years before, he had drawn up a deed of separation between Sir John and Lady Boulger.

The lawyer admitted at once that he had done so, but made some demur about showing a copy to the detective; however, after Frisner had offered to submit the matter to the Embassy, and had informed him of the death of Sir John Boulger and its circumstances, the lawyer gave in and produced the draft agreement of the separation.

In it Sir John Boulger covenanted that his wife should have the full enjoyment of the settlements he had made upon her at the time of their marriage, amounting according to the attached schedule to something like forty thousand pounds, on condition that she remained chaste and assumed the name of Dawson — which name she had herself selected — in place of that of Boulger, and that it was furthermore covenanted between them that she was not under any circumstances whatever to use the title of

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"Lady" either as a prefix to the names of Boulger or Dawson. Finally it was mutually agreed that their marriage should be kept secret.

Having arranged for a copy of this document to be sent after him to his department, Frisner once more took the train and returned to London by the night boat.

By twelve the next day he was sitting in his office refreshed by a cold bath and a change of clothes, and had done an hour's work. At that hour entered the Herr Flütz, red-faced and excited.

"Dese tam anarchists," he observed, "have given me and Sergeant Benson a tevble of a morning's work; we haf followed dem nearly all over London in a motor. Dey had a motor too, and were following — Hoffmann."

"There must have been a regular procession of you," observed Frisner. "I wonder you were not taken for a political demonstration."

"We kept a long way behind," corrected Flütz, "observing dem. We observe dem a good deal from public-houses. I haf been oblige drink six glas bier dis morning, through going into public-houses to make observation."

"Why do you follow these men?" asked Frisner.

"Dere are two of dem," explained Flütz evasively, "an Italian and a pig-dog of a countryman of mine called Plaff. He is the tool of the Italian. I

## THE BUNDLE OF LETTERS

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do not know wedder dey haf bombs mit dem or not. Dese bombs made mit de high explosive are so small some ov dem would go in de waistcoat-pocket."

Frisner took up his pen as if tired of the subject.

"Well, I won't ask you to tell me secrets, Herr Flütz," he said dryly. "Is there anything I can do for you this morning?"

"Yes; I want you let me haf anoder man for to relieve Benson. I haf left him making observation ov dem haffing dinner in Zoho Square."

"Very well," replied the Inspector, quickly scribbling an order. "I will detail another man. Only promise me one thing, Herr Flütz."

"Certainly, *mein freund*. Was is it?"

"Don't get either of my men dynamited if you can help it. Really good men like these are very scarce."

The Herr noted the twinkle in Frisner's eye, and made no verbal answer for the moment; he placed one rather dirty forefinger to the side of his nose very knowingly, then diving his other hand into his coat-pocket, produced a very fat German cigar, which he thrust under the nose of Frisner.

"Good appetite for smoke, Mister Inspector?" he said offering his hand. "I vill bring back your men safe and zound, I bromise you." With that he departed down the stairs in a cloud of strong tobacco smoke.

Frisner during the next half-hour devoted him-

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

self steadily to completing some closely-written sheets of foolscap; he had scarcely laid down his pen with a sigh when the police messenger brought him a letter, just delivered by the postman.

He opened it and read with some interest —

“*Carlton Club, Pall Mall,*  
“*Tuesday.*

“**DEAR MR. INSPECTOR,**

“I should be very much obliged if you could spare time to call and see me this evening at Prince Albert Mansions, concerning a matter on which I very much desire your assistance. Nine o'clock will suit me well if it should meet your convenience also. I may mention that the matter is not unconnected with the Great Yellow Diamond.

“Faithfully yours,  
“**HUBERT BEAUCLERK.”**

“Some people would call this providential,” observed the Inspector. “I prefer to call it a convenient combination of circumstances.”

There came a knock at the door, and in response to his “Come in,” there entered Sergeant Smart.

“I was out again last night with Annette Lupin, Mrs. Beauclerk’s French maid, sir,” he said, “and she showed me this packet of letters, which she told me she had found in an old dress of her mistress’s, but which I don’t believe. It’s my opinion she

## THE BUNDLE OF LETTERS

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sneaked them out of some secret drawer she got to know about. I had to give her a fiver before she would let me have them, and to promise her another tenner if they were used; but I don't think you will object when you have read them. I took the liberty of looking through the packet myself. They are from the late Sir John Boulger to Mrs. Beauclerk before she married her present husband."

Frisner eagerly took the little packet of letters from his subordinate and rapidly looked through them.

They extended over some years, but the principal interest was condensed into the last three, the others being mostly letters accompanying cheques sent at "Christmas and on "Mrs. Dawson's" birthdays. The last absorbed all the Inspector's attention. It ran as follows:

"DEAR MATILDA,

"Understand, once and for all, that I absolutely refuse to countenance your proposal to go through a ceremony of marriage with Mr. Beauclerk. I have met him on several occasions, both professionally and in society, and have formed a very high opinion of his character. I believe him to be a thoroughly honest, upright and honourable gentleman, and I *will* not have him deceived and his life blighted.

"If you should persevere in your intention as you

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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state you will do, I shall have no other alternative but to *open his eyes*; and remember, Matilda, that all interest under your marriage settlement ceases in the event of your contracting a bigamous marriage.

“Yours,

“JOHN BOULGER.”

The letter was dated from his office in Oxford Street, ten days before his murder.

Frisner laid down the letter and turned to Sergeant Smart.

“You had better be outside the main entrance of Prince Albert Mansions with another plain-clothes man — Robbins for choice, he’s used to women, like yourself — at nine o’clock sharp this evening, and come in directly I wave my handkerchief out of one of the windows of Mr. Beauclerk’s flat.”

The two men exchanged a glance, then Smart answered, “Very good, sir,” turned on his heel and departed.

Left to himself Frisner opened the drawer of his writing-table, took out the closely-written sheets of foolscap he had been engaged upon, added a long paragraph, then attached the last letter of Sir John Boulger to Mrs. Dawson to them with a brass clip and laid them aside.

“There’s the case,” he remarked almost cheerfully, “all ready for the Treasury solicitors.” He dipped his hand into the drawer again and pro-

## THE BUNDLE OF LETTERS

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duced a long blue paper, "And there's the warrant," he added, "all ready for execution." He paused and repeated the last word meditatively, with his hand to his chin, "*Execution.* Ah!" he added, shaking his head, "a great pity; such a fine woman! Such a beautiful woman! And to come to this!" He continued to shake his head as he placed the warrant in his breast-pocket and pushed the foolscap sheets into a long official envelope. "I don't know what Mr. Beauclerk's business may be with *me*," he continued, "but I *know* I shall have a terrible story to tell *him*. God help him! It may kill him!" He closed the long envelope and directed it, then thrust his hands deep into his trousers-pockets, walked to the window and looked out, softly whistling. "I wonder," he muttered to himself between the whistles, "when women will learn the wisdom of forgetting that fatal trick of the sex — keeping old letters?"

## CHAPTER XXXII

### VENGEANCE!

"THAT is the whole of the story, I assure you, Hubert," remarked Mrs. Beauclerk, turning her fine eyes from her husband to Hugh Featherstone, who was sitting between them in their dining-room at Prince Albert Mansions. They had not long finished dinner, the correct butler had left them, and Mona Beauclerk had just concluded a confession of a certain matter to her husband.

"Yes," responded Hugh Featherstone, "that's about the lot, I think! I'm very glad Mona's made up her mind to tell you, Beauclerk."

Mr. Beauclerk answered with a sigh of relief and removed his *pince-nez* from their business position with a click, a habit he had when about to address the court.

"Of course I am very glad you have told me," he began; "it has set my mind at rest on many points, which have filled my head with unworthy suspicions, and made my life a hell upon earth for months past."

"Of course," he continued, "it was a most foolish proceeding, there cannot be two opinions about that, and a very hazardous one."

## VENGEANCE!

---

"Why hazardous?" asked his wife.

"Why, my dear," he answered affectionately, "you might have been both arrested!"

She paled at the word.

"What for?" she asked innocently.

"I'm not a criminal lawyer," he replied, "thank God! And don't know much about that part of the law, but you might both have been arrested, I suppose, for unlawful possession. People cannot go about wearing Crown jewels, without running the risk of being asked where they got them from."

Mr. Beauclerk leant back in his chair and began to laugh, as if some humorous thought had just struck him.

"Upon my word," he cried, "I never heard of such a thing! Taking an empty house, and burrowing a tunnel into the bowels of the earth from the back garden."

He gave way to a hearty fit of laughter in which the other two joined.

"Of course," continued Hubert Beauclerk presently, "you cannot keep any of the property. True, it can be shown by the old document that the money and jewels were in the possession of your ancestor, Featherstone, but that gives no title to it. The treasure belongs to the Crown, and was only *deposited* with old John Featherstone for a time by James II. It must be given up."

"To whom?" asked Featherstone.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"To the Crown; it must be sent to the Crown Office," Beauclerk replied.

"As far as I am concerned," replied Featherstone, "I shall be glad to get rid of it, although it certainly *has* brought me luck. I didn't part with the old guineas, but raised money on them and speculated with it. I was almost *frightened* at the result. Everything I touched turned up trumps; the original amount is I should say *quadrupled* by now, and it is still going on growing. You can therefore understand that I can afford to return the old guineas — which I have long ago released — although I hope the luck won't go with them. As for the jewels, with the exception of a few I gave a friend — of no great value — they are at my banker's just as I received them."

"The money I obtained for my guineas is, I fear, all gone," vouchsafed Mrs. Beauclerk. "I sold them. As regards the jewels, what remains of them I will give up, but I have exchanged some. As for my poor dear Yellow Diamond," she added pathetically, always speaking of it as one would of some dear departed child — "I shall never see that more in this world I am convinced. Ah!" she sighed with tears in her eyes, "it was a beautiful, beautiful stone, I shall never see another like it."

"No," added her husband dryly, "I should say from what Frisner told us *that* is gone forever.

## VENGEANCE!

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Back to the people it originally belonged to probably, and perhaps it's as well."

"The world is full of partings," added Mona tearfully. "Annette left me this morning, and took some of my small jewellery with her and a ten-pound note. Just after she had been paid too!"

"Let her go," remarked her husband irritably, "you have got off cheap. It is no good taking trouble with a woman like that. She will go back to France and find her way into prison by natural gravitation. Talking of Frisner, however," he continued, "reminds me of something. Last night, after Mona had given me an outline of this matter, it struck me it would be better to take time by the forelock, and be *first* with the authorities. In other words, to *square* matters if possible. For that reason I have asked Inspector Frisner to come up and see me this evening, and to give me his opinion *unofficially* on certain points."

"Oh! is it necessary, dear?" queried his wife somewhat petulantly.

"I consider it so," he answered decisively. "The communication I shall make to Inspector Frisner will be absolutely confidential, and it will incriminate no one. If trouble should arise it is as well to have prepared for it."

Mona Beauclerk shrugged her white shoulders, reached herself a cigarette and lit it.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

---

"Yes, I think you are quite right, Beauclerk," said Featherstone reflectively. "I shall be guided absolutely by your advice."

The staid-looking butler entered and looked apologetically towards his master.

"Inspector Frisner, sir," he said.

"Oh! Inspector Frisner," repeated Mr. Beauclerk smiling. "Show him into the library, Barrett."

"I took the liberty of showing him in there at once, sir," he ventured.

"Very well, tell him I will be there in a minute. And Barrett!" he added, as the man was leaving, "take in some whisky and soda, and a box of cigars."

"Yes, sir."

Hubert Beauclerk rose from the table smiling.

"Now, I'm just going to put things a bit straight for you two naughty people," he said jokingly, "and mind you never do it again!"

They both assumed mock attitudes of penitence and promised they never would. Hubert moving towards the door, paused and looked down into his wife's beautiful face as he passed her, then giving her a little loving pat on the cheek, left the room.

Hugh Featherstone rose, and looked out of the window.

"There's Hoffmann!" he cried, taking out his watch; "punctual to the minute. He's a treasure!"

## VENGEANCE!

---

"Is that your wonderful *gentleman* chauffeur?" asked Mona rather uneasily; "how I *should* like to have a chat with him about his experiences!"

"He's not very communicative," answered Hugh, "he never speaks to me about them."

Mona came to the window and stood by him, putting her arm familiarly through his.

"I say, Hugh," she cried, "why not ask him up, and give him a glass of wine and a cigar? It would pass the time while Hubert is with that horrid detective."

"How about the motor?" asked Hugh.

"He could bring that into the courtyard, and the porter would look after it," she suggested.

"All right," answered Hugh; "I don't mind if your husband don't."

"I am sure he won't," she answered, "he sympathizes with him deeply."

"Very well, then," said Featherstone, "I'll go down and fetch him up. Thank you for showing him some civility, Mona. He's a rare good sort."

It was a beautiful clear summer night, a green-blue tinge in the sky.

She watched at the window while Hugh went down, beheld him speak to Fritz, and saw the motor-car pass beneath her into the courtyard. She noticed several men idling about on the opposite side near the Gardens, two looked like foreigners and were smoking cigarettes. Then in a few minutes

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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Hugh returned, with the good-looking chauffeur with him.

Fritz appeared in a grey suit of clothes; the only parts about him which savoured of the chauffeur were his legs; these were encased in long boots. His heavy uniform coat with brass buttons which he always wore at night, and his flat cap, he had left on a chair in the corridor, outside the dining-room.

He took a chair at Mrs. Beauclerk's bidding, helped himself to a cigar, and filled his glass from the decanter which she placed at his elbow, while she regarded him with curiosity and great interest.

She thought him a very good-looking fellow, and noted the grey hair at the temples, which she thought rather becoming!

This was the man she had allowed to go to a cruel death, without so much as raising a finger to save him, although she knew full well he was perfectly innocent.

Not that the sight of him now, with his grey hair and lines about the mouth which gave his handsome face a sorrowful look, moved her in the slightest. On the contrary, to her it was but another argument in favour of that popular rule "to let things go, and they are sure to come right." Although she let him go into the dread shadow of the gallows, and put out no hand to save him, she could contemplate him now perfectly calmly, and with an assurance at her

## VENGEANCE!

---

heart that it was all right and had been all along.

He sat smoking, and chatting agreeably and with perfect ease on any light subject of the hour, but refused to be drawn on his prison experiences.

She made two or three attempts to lead him round to the subject, failed, and turned to something else. She lit a cigarette and looked at him through the smoke until she tired of that and of the conversation about motors, which did not interest her, although she understood driving them. Then she thought of her husband and the detective, and began to wonder what they were talking about.

"I think, Hugh," she said rising, "that I will go and see how Hubert is getting on with that tiresome Mr. Frisner. Don't mind me, Mr. Hoffmann," she said to Fritz, who was rising too, "I'll be back again in a minute. And Hugh," she added as she was going, "I wish you would ring for some whisky and soda."

She gave them a smile, and was gone.

Fritz Hoffmann as he stood gazing on the beautiful features of her face, wreathed in a smile of exquisite sweetness, little knew what effect upon his destiny those grey-blue eyes and crimson lips had had.

She left the dining-room softly, and frou-frou'd down the corridor, with that graceful, undulating walk peculiar to her, and most strong, healthy women.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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She noted Fritz's uniform overcoat lying on a chair, and the flat cap beside it, and smiled to herself at the idea of entertaining a chauffeur at her table.

She came to the door of the library, which opened outwards to give more space to the room itself; she listened a moment to the subdued hum of a voice within, one person was speaking and it was not her husband.

She grew curious, and gently turning the handle of the door opened it about an inch, knowing she could do this without being seen, as a heavy curtain hung within, covering the doorway; then the sound of the voice became perfectly audible; the detective was speaking to her husband, who she could see, to her amazement, listened with his face buried in his hands; every word that Inspector Frisner uttered was perfectly clear and distinct to her.

"There cannot be a shadow of a doubt, Mr. Beauclerk," he said, "that your wife disguised herself and under the name of Mrs. Willoughby obtained an order to view the house which was to let, two doors off that of Sir John Boulger. She so ingratiated herself with the caretakers, by repeated visits and gifts of money, that they allowed her to wander as freely as she would, and as long as she would, over the empty house."

"Knowing the habits of Sir John, and that he

## VENGEANCE!

---

took a sleep after luncheon, when the house was perfectly quiet, she formed a deep-laid plot to enter his house by the roof, steal down the stairs, which she knew would be deserted at the servants' dinner-time, stab Sir John as he slept, and return as she came. This she did, hiding the handle of the broken dagger in the chimney of Miss Ethel Boulger's room as she passed. There can be no question that her plan was greatly aided by finding that the door to the roof was left unlocked, and this she no doubt ascertained days before. Sir John Boulger out of the way she was free to marry you. It is one of the deepest schemes I have ever met with in my experience, and would have been absolutely successful and undiscovered but for the finding of the dagger-sheath. I am very sorry, Mr. Beauclerk, but it is my duty to arrest her at once. Here is the warrant."

As the detective drew a blue paper from his pocket poor Hubert Beauclerk's head — his hands tightly clasped before his face — went down on the table, and his broad, manly frame was shaken by sobs. Frisner leant over him, and laid his hand soothingly on his shoulder.

Livid to the lips, Mrs. Beauclerk gently closed the door, put her hand to her head and looked wildly round; her gaze fell upon Fritz's overcoat and flat cap lying on the chair.

"The motor!" she gasped; "there is still time.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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He won't recover from that fit of weeping for some minutes."

She sped along the corridor to her bedroom, hastily opened her safe over the mantelpiece, and crammed all the notes and gold she found there into a little handbag which she slung over her wrist; then she gathered up the best of her jewels, and wrapping them in a handkerchief thrust them into her pocket.

Going to the looking-glass she pulled her hair at the back in a way that made it appear all short curls, then, with one glance round, she left the room.

A sudden impulse seized her, as she passed the dining-room, to look in; Hugh and Fritz Hoffmann were still smoking and talking, with whisky and soda between them.

"Are you all right?" she asked, with a great effort forcing a smile.

"Yes; we're all right, thanks," replied Featherstone; "but, by Jove! Mona, how white you look! Are you ill?"

"Oh no," she answered quickly; "I'm — I'm all right. Don't you trouble about me."

There was something in his face which attracted her, perhaps she was fond of him, she looked at him, then, taking a step, touched him lightly on the hair.

"I shall be all right," she said slowly, in a dazed voice. The two that heard it thought of it after,

## VENGEANCE!

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and the look on her face as she waved Featherstone back from following her, and went quickly through the door.

Once in the passage she went straight to Fritz's coat and cap, threw the former over her arm and carried the cap in her hand; then ran quickly to the staircase, and disappeared down it, halting in a dark corner to slip on the chauffeur's overcoat. Being tall for a woman, and Fritz only of medium height for a man, the coat was not much too large. She fastened the big brass buttons across her breast, put on the flat cap, and turned up the collar.

Running quickly down the remaining flight she halted at the foot and reconnoitred. Yes, there was the motor standing empty in the middle of the courtyard. The porter was in his office reading the evening paper held close up to the electric light. One of the foreign-looking men she had noticed near the railings of Kensington Gardens opposite was just sauntering away from the motor-car, as if he had taken advantage of the deserted state of the courtyard to look in and idly examine it, as passers-by will do. She did not hesitate another moment, but boldly crossed the hall; the porter just glanced up from his newspaper as she disappeared through the door, then went on reading. She passed round the front of the motor-car, and set the machinery in motion, then stepped quickly in, put over the lever, gave the steering-wheel a turn, and in five seconds

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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was through the gateway and out on the main road. Here she turned sharply to the left towards Kensington High Street, and as she put on speed, muttered to herself between her teeth —

“If I can only reach the coast, I have enough money with me to *buy* a fishing-boat, if need be, to sail me across the Channel.”

As she disappeared in a cloud of dust into the twilight of the summer night, the sauntering foreigner, who had quickly left the courtyard of the Mansions as she appeared, nudged his companion as they leant together against the railings of Kensington Gardens opposite, and spoke to him in German.

“It is done,” he said; “he has got it this time. I put it under his seat. Give me the money, and I will get away to Liverpool.”

He had scarcely spoken when a motor-car raced up out of the night from the direction of Knightsbridge, pulled up short just in front of them and dropped two men, who, blowing a whistle for assistance, immediately seized and handcuffed them, being aided by two other men who came out of the shadow of the trees.

This being done, a stout foreigner who had remained in the car gave orders to the chauffeur to go off after the other car in the direction of Kensington as fast as possible; as the motor disappeared, a white handkerchief was waved from a window of

## VENGEANCE!

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Prince Albert Mansions, and the two detectives who had been lurking under the trees crossed the road and entered the flats; as they did so a deafening report like the sound of a cannon came from the direction of Kensington.

Inspector Frisner entered the room in which Hugh Featherstone and Fritz sat smoking, and with a slight bow went to the open window, and, leaning out, waved a white handkerchief over the balcony; then he turned to Hugh.

"I thought Mrs. Beauclerk was with you," he said; "I understood so from her husband."

Hugh looked at him quickly and at the handkerchief he was putting away.

"She *was* here a moment ago," he replied. "I don't suppose she is far off. Do you want her?"

"Yes, I do," the detective answered; "very urgently."

"Then I'll ring the bell for the butler," suggested Hugh, rising; "no doubt he'll find her in a moment."

"Yes, do," said Frisner; "meanwhile I'll go back to Mr. Beauclerk."

He did not go back to Mr. Beauclerk, who, prostrated with grief, was in a state of mental collapse in the library. He went to meet Sergeant Smart and the other plain clothes detective who were coming up the stairs.

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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"No lady has left the mansions, I suppose?" he asked.

"No," responded Smart; "no one has left since we have been there. Only a motor-car came out about two or three minutes ago, with no one in it but the chauffeur. We had a nice tumble with two anarchists."

"What's that awful explosion?" asked Frisner, as the windows of the flat rattled under a great reverberation.

"Sounds like a cannon," ventured Smart. "I hope no one is blowing up Kensington Palace."

"Well, we must get on with the business in hand," proceeded Frisner, "at any rate. You come with me Smart, and you, Robbins, stay here in the corridor, and don't let any one leave the flat."

The inspector and Smart then commenced a rapid search of the suite, not scrupling to even enter the bedrooms, the doors of most of which, including Mrs. Beauclerk's, stood wide open.

They had returned to the dining-room to make further inquiries of Hugh, and Fritz, and Barrett, the butler, when the door was thrown violently open and Herr Flütz rushed wildly in.

"Dey haf kill him! dey haf kill him!" he cried frantically; "he is blown into a tausend pieces. Dose verdamt anarchists have put a bomb under the front seat of the motor."

Then his glance fell upon Fritz standing in the

## VENGEANCE!

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shadow beyond the radius of the electric lamps. Flütz's whole countenance changed at once; he seemed petrified with astonishment.

"I haf seen him, mit my own eyes," he muttered, "go off in de motor-car; it is blown to atoms, and he is here alive and well."

"What's the matter, Flütz?" asked Fritz calmly.  
"What has upset you?"

"It is his voice," stammered Flütz; "it is himself."

He went slowly to Fritz, then falling on one knee took his right hand and kissed it.

"Gott pless your Madjesty," he said humbly.

Frisner touched him lightly on the shoulder and whispered, "What are you doing? Who is this?"

Flütz turned to him as he knelt, and replied with great dignity —

"Dis shentleman is King Frederick de Fifth of Atavia. His uncle de old king, died of heart disease at three o'clock dis afternoon."

And the beautiful Mona — or Matilda Beauclerk — where is she? Where are those charms of perfect form and figure? those blue-grey eyes, and gold-brown curling hair? Ask of the two white-faced policemen who are wheeling *something* which was once a woman, in the brown canvas covered ambulance to Kensington mortuary.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### VALE

"AND so you leave England to-day for Bittenberg, Fritz? or 'your Majesty,' I should say," added the Princess Marguerite as she made a low, very graceful half-mock curtsey. "I should think you will be glad to get away from it after your terrible adventures."

She resumed her former position, standing before the rose-filled fire-place in her boudoir in St. James's Palace, with one hand on the mantelpiece.

Fritz habited in the frock coat and continuations of civilization stood opposite to her, the toe of his patent leather boot resting on the brass rail of the hearth curb.

"No," he answered, smiling, into her bright *riant* face; "I shall, on the contrary, be sorry to leave dear old England. I love it."

"Ah!" she said slyly, yet not without a slight look of pain, "you are leaving *some one* behind, perhaps. Is it Miss Ethel Boulger?"

He smiled rather sadly.

"Miss Ethel Boulger is left far behind already," he replied.

“ How is that? ” Marguerite asked.

“ In one short quarter of an hour,” he replied slowly, looking down at the roses in the fire-place, “ Miss Ethel robbed me of a delusion which had lasted months. She showed me that the divinity I had worshipped was no divinity at all, but a very cold, calculating woman.”

“ And you would have thrown your life away for *her?* ” asked Marguerite.

“ Yes; I would have thrown my life away for her gladly, *once.* ”

“ Tell me,” asked the Princess, anxious to change the current of his thoughts, “ why did you so suddenly come back to England after your father’s, the Grand Duke of Brenberg’s, death? ”

“ As you know,” replied Fritz, “ soon after I left the Boulger’s yacht I was summoned to his death-bed, and remained with him to the end. I attended his funeral with my younger brother, Otto, and there I met my uncle, the King. At such a time and place I should have thought that he would have let by-gones be by-gones, and have given me a word of sympathy and kindness, but he drew himself up before all the assembled nobles, with great hauteur, and refused to acknowledge my presence, though he knew full well I was the Heir Apparent. Alas! poor man, he little knew he was so soon to follow his brother to the grave, or he might have acted differently, and I, too, for I gave him back hauteur

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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for hauteur; but we parted as we had met, without a word."

"He could not forget your marriage," said Marguerite gently, "with poor Rose the circus-rider."

"And yet he had been told she was dead," urged Fritz, "and that I was free."

Marguerite shook her head.

"No, he could not forget it, Fritz," she said, "although he may have forgiven you, poor man."

"Then I came back to England in disgust," proceeded Fritz, "and vowed I'd stop there as long as my uncle lived, and earn my own living. I was not going to stay in Atavia and be snubbed day by day by the head of my family. Poor old Flütz has been trying his best ever since to get me to go back, urged on by the Ministers, and I have refused; but *now* things are different — I *must* go."

The Princess looked up and smiled at him.

"And will you ever come back?" she asked.

"One thing," he answered, looking into her eyes, "would make me come back."

"And that?"

"Marguerite," he said, taking her hand, "it is my destiny to govern a great nation, to rule a great army, to devote my life to a great object — the welfare of my people. Will you share that work with me — my pleasures, my hopes, my sorrows? Will you sit beside me on the throne and be my Queen?"

She looked up steadfastly into his eyes for a few

## VALE

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moments before she answered him; then the words came in a low, sweet voice.

"If in three months, Fritz, dear," she said, "you think as you think now, come back and see."

In the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice there is a well-known barrister who has a very large consulting practice, conducted, of course, almost exclusively in Chambers. He is a broad-shouldered, strong-looking man, albeit he stoops very much, and his hair is perfectly white, though he is still a man in the prime of life. Notwithstanding that his life is spent mostly at his writing-table, yet there are rare occasions upon which he goes into court to plead some very special case, and at these times one thing occurs always, and is looked for. In the middle of some learned speech — for he is a man celebrated for his learning — he will stop and become absolutely silent, his eyes looking straight before him as if he were sunk in a deep reverie. And so he will remain until his junior — who has looked for this time to arrive — will gently pull his silken gown and whisper to him the thread of his discourse; then, with a great sigh, he will come to himself, and a look of pain and humility will come over his face as he bows towards the judge and continues his speech.

The hardest, driest judge in those hard, dry courts will have a look of pity for him at those times, and

## THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY

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all — all are very, very kind to him, for they know that over the life of Hubert Beauclerk a dark pall has fallen which will never be lifted this side of the grave.

In one of the finest houses in Belgrave Square lives a very prosperous lady indeed. It is said of Mrs. Hugh Featherstone —*nee* Ethel Boulger — that she possesses everything which in this world can make life happy — beautiful children, a loving husband, and boundless wealth, for Hugh is fabulously rich.

Yet she never takes up a newspaper and reads of the movements of their Majesties King Frederick of Atavia and Marguerite, his lovely Queen, or the paragraphs appearing at regular intervals recording the births of their many fine children, without casting some bitter reflection on the doings of foreign royalties.

THE END







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